

ORAL HISTORY

LOUISE TODD LAMBERT

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Oral History of

Louise Todd Lambert

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Interview History

Oral History of LOUISE TODD LAMBERT

Born: May 12, 1905, in San Francisco, California

Interviews held on: May 13, May 27, June 3, June 16, July 10,
July 22, July 29, August 6, August 14 and
August 25, 1976

Interviewer: Lucy Kendall

Time of Interview: Approximately twenty hours

The following is a transcript of a lengthy interview with Louise Lambert, a woman who spent most of her early life as a full time functionary in the Communist Party of California. The purpose of the interview was to establish a basis for interviewing other women who spent their lives in social reform, trade union activities, progressive and radical organizations, to effect the social changes of the nineteen twenties, thirties and forties.

Conduct of the Interview

Although she was hesitant at first about being interviewed, Ms. Lambert (when she finally accepted) devoted a great deal of time and thought to preparation, researching files of the People's World and Western Worker for the early period of her activities.

Having spent years as a leader and public speaker, she, of necessity, learned to polish and round out her thinking and develop her opinions before speaking. Preparation is second nature to her. This explains some of the more stilted sections of the interview.

This series may have some "sins of omission" on certain subjects. The McCarthy years are still close to many people. The background and training of self protection in the face of possible loss of jobs, jailing, persecution, etc. is not easily broken. As one woman said, "Who knows when fascism can come?" I look at Nixon and shudder."

The Interviewer knew Ms. Lambert when they were both members of the party (Ms. Lambert as a leader and Kendall as a rank and file member). Louise Todd, as then known, was one of the most respected and loved members of the leading body in California, second only to Anita Whitney. The interviewer had some difficulty in preparing for the interview because she was in awe of Ms. Lambert. At times, and rightly so, Ms. Lambert took the lead in determining the approach to

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certain subjects. As the interview developed we were able to get more personal reactions to situations.

All the interviews were conducted at the apartment of the narrator - a small three room apartment in a privately owned housing development subsidized by the Federal Government. It is a light airy, and furnished in impeccable taste. It houses a large and continually growing library, plants, a music system and records. Many excellent reproductions and paintings adorn the walls.

Editing

Ms. Lambert corrected the entire transcript. It was then partially retyped, with almost no editing. Some paragraphs are made when not needed to facilitate reading. Otherwise the changes made after Ms. Lambert's corrections are minimal ones of deleting "crutch" words such as "you know", etc., and false starts (which were very few).

The interviewee

Is a handsome woman, well groomed, articulate, interesting, and interested in a wide variety of subjects. She is currently a docent at the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Golden Gate Park. Despite the fact that she is forced to live frugally on her social security she has far ranging interests; among them reading omnivorously, gardening, hiking, astronomy, marine biology, and community action.

Rudie Lambert, her husband, had been ill for over fifteen years before his death in the fall of 1976.

Narrative Account of the Interview

The interview follows closely Ms. Lambert's life, starting with her childhood in San Francisco, her growing up in a Socialist environment, and her schooling.

It was necessary that she work after graduating from high school although she would have preferred a college education.

The Interview continues with her joining the communist party and her subsequent full time activities.

From then on her life becomes more hectic, including a term in Tehachapi prison for women. The interview goes into detail on prison life.

A divorce, second marriage, and continuation of full time activity follow. Then there is a section on her part in helping to put the Independent Progressive Party on the ballot in California.

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When the McCarthy period arrived, Ms. Lambert was chosen to "go underground" in order that the Communist Party would not be without leadership in the event of fascism and arrest of its open leadership.

The narrative continues with an account of her life in the underground, her return to San Francisco in the fifties, and goes briefly into her husband's experiences as one of the Smith Act victims in California.

Conclusion is Ms. Lambert's resignation from the party along with several others during the latter 1950's.

Since Ms. Lambert and her husband were close friends of Anita Whitney, an additional section covers her memories of Anita Whitney.

March, 1978
Lucy Kendall



Home M. Todd built in 1911 at 311 Joos^e Street, San Francisco
Negative No. 29165 - filed under Lambert, Louise Todd
in Portrait files.



Tehachapi Prison - where Louise Todd Lambert was
incarcerated for over one year.

Filed under Kern County, Tehachapi Pass in photograph collection.



Louise Todd (first child on right) with
Sister, Resalie, and parents. 1909

Filed under Lambert in Portrait Collection



Louise Todd High School Graduation - 1922

Filed under Lambert in Portrait collection



Louise Todd Lambert family photographs

Left Front: Grandmother - grandfather on mother's side, with Louise Todd on grandfather's lap.

Top Row: right - father, Max W. Todd

Taken around 1907

filed under Negative 21967

Filed under Lambert in Portrait files.



Rosalie and Louise Todd
1915

Neg. none

Louise (right)

Both

Filed under Lambert in Portraits



Rosalie and Louise Todd
1912

Neg. 21966

Louise (right)

LOUISE TODD LAMBERT

Transcript, May 13, 1976 - first tape

Ken: Where were you born, and what date?

Lam: I was born in San Francisco on May 12, 1905.

Ken: What was your maiden name?

Lam: Louise Todd.

Ken: Oh, that is actually your real name?

Lam: Yes.

Ken: What was your mother's maiden name?

Lam: Rosalie Dinslage.

Ken: And your father's name was -

Lam: Max Todd.

Ken: You want to tell me a little bit about your mother and father, how old they were when you were born, and so on.

Lam: Well, my mother was 23, and my father 28. My father was a baker. And they met and married here in San Francisco.

My father came from Germany. He was actually born and raised in Germany and came to the United States when he was seventeen years old to avoid the draft in Germany. However, he was born a citizen of the United States because his father had migrated to Boston sometime before that. My father was the third son of his family. The two older were born in Boston. His father had become an American citizen, so when my father was born, he was born an American citizen.

His coming to the United States seemed to be a very logical step for him. He came to Boston where he lived with an aunt, and where he remained for some years before coming to California. He came to California in 1901 and became a charter member of the Bakers Union Local and joined the newly formed Socialist Party. He was in the same branch as Jack London and became a good friend of his.

It should be stated that my father's father, and his mother, were what they called "freethinkers". They were not religious, and they were very much influenced by the socialist thought of the time. His mother's father had been a captain on the barricades of the 1846 revolution in Saxony, and all his life pursued a life of interest in the political developments of the European socialist movements. He was an artist. And my father's father was an architect, as were his three

brothers. But all of them were of the same sort of political persuasion. So there was a natural progression for my father to get into the Socialist Party movement when he became mature and came to California. His reason for coming to California was stimulated by the fact that when he was in school he saw a picture of Yosemite Valley in a geography book and wanted to come and see that. And when he arrived in California there was an economic crisis and he had a very hard time finding a job. He was a skilled baker who had been trained in the European way of baking before coming to America.

My mother's coming to San Francisco has a different kind of history. Her parents lived in a small town called Verden near Bremen in North Germany. Her father was the son of a teacher and an active follower of Ferdinand LaSalle, a Socialist in this community.

My grandfather was a cigar maker. In the little town of Verden there was a cigar making factory supplied by tobacco that came from all over the Americas through the port of Bremen.

In the years of 1881 - 1882 there was also an economic crises in Germany. And in 1881 there arrived in their community a man from the Hawaiian Islands, from the Island of Kauai, representing a sugar plantation there which was run by a man named Isenberg. They needed workers in the sugar plantations and in the sugar refineries. The recruiter was supposed to have gone into the rural areas of Germany for recruiting of potential workers for this plantation in Kauai because they thought if the workers had some agricultural background they would be more adaptable to working in the sugar fields. The concept was that they were going to use these men as foremen in the sugar fields and the refineries because they could not break in the Chinese and Japanese they were bringing in, and the Hawaiians didn't lend themselves to the kind of exploitation which was carried on in those early sugar plantations. So they felt that if they got Germans they would be able to use them in that capacity. The recruiter didn't get out into the agricultural

areas because he stopped short in this little town where there was an economic crisis and took the easy way out. He actually succeeded in lining up a large number of families - families with children, small children, to sign up to come to the Islands.

My grandparents then had three children, two boys and my mother who was only about two months old when this took place.

In 1882 they started out in a ship that was an old freighter, and the hold was used to house the families with their children and all their belongings. They had to go all the way around South America, through the Straits of Magellen, up to the Hawaiian Islands.

They had been promised homes, schools, churches of their own. Most of them were Lutheran, although there were Catholics among them; and some were athiests, as my grandparents were, imbued with this concept of socialism which they had soaked up under the influence of LaSalle. Well, when they got to the Islands there was nothing, just an empty beach, and there wasn't even lumber to build houses with. Ultimately they did get houses. The men were under contract. They got fifteen dollars a month in pay. They were actually contract labor, and they had to work off their passage once they got there, which took a number of years. They contracted for, I think, two to four years.

My grandfather was put into a sugar mill as a foreman. Because of his nature and characteristics he was a very poor foreman indeed. When they had been there six years they felt that they could finally come to California. It was another four years before they achieved it. After ten years in the Islands, they finally came to California and originally settled in Paso Robles. Then moved up to San Francisco.

My mother's education was somewhat limited by the time they got here. They got her through grammar school and she went to a secretarial course and did some domestic work for the Fleishaker family in San Francisco, worked as a secretary, then went to work in a bakery where she met my father. With my father she joined the Socialist Party. This explains the background and, to some extent, the roots of my logical development.

Lam:

When I was a child, our home life was characterized by a great deal of discussion. I can remember the 1912 elections when Eugene Debs got some 12 million votes. The Appeal to Reason, the newspaper, was read avidly by my parents. I can remember wanting to know what that phrase meant, "the appeal to reason." I didn't understand it. My father explained it. Once it got into my head it seemed to me a very profound title for a newspaper. In any event, the American Socialist Party followed the footsteps of the Socialist party in general. They were pacifists. They took a pacifist position until the first world war broke out, when the German Socialists came out in support of the fatherland. Then, of course, the socialist movement practically crumbled away. In that period there was the big preparadness parade which resulted in the arrest of Tom Mooney and [Warren] Billings. During that period I was in school.

Our family got our first taste of a certain amount of persecution during that time. My father was called in for investigation for some potential tie to the bomb which was dropped in the preparadness parade. They tried to determine that he was a chemist. He had never even gone to college. He never studies chemistry. But this is what they approached him on - that he was a chemist in disguise as a baker. They were trying to tie up the bombing with him, which was impossible of course; and the whole thing was dropped.

In the course of that my sister and I in school began to feel the way in which we were ostracized at the instigation of the teacher. I had a very close girl friend who told me that her parents didn't want her to play with me any more. We were particularly made a butt of criticism when World War preparations were going on and they were selling Liberty Bonds and what they called thrift stamps. Thrift stamps were sold to the school children, and they were twenty-five cents a stamp; and you filled out little cards with them. Each class wanted to be one hundred percent. Every child got his thrift stamps, which were minieatur liberty bonds. Well, my parents, who were at the time against war in general as pacificists, would not permit us to buy these stamps. Their objection to war was interpreted as meaning they were on the side of Germany in the war, which they were not. So our two classes, my sister's and mind, were not one hundred percent. This made it possible for the teacher to use us as examples in a very, vey cruel way which

Lam: has always remained with me because, as I said, it was the first taste of what could happen.

One time she asked each child to tell the class where their parents were born - to stand up and say where your mother was born and where your father was born. When they got to me I had to say that my father and my mother were both born in Germany. She kept me standing, did not allow me to sit down, and said, "The Germans are our enemy. They are cruel, they are Huns", you know, on like that. And here I am virtually collapsing from the shock. There was no kind of apology, no offer at all to say this child is not responsible for this. I came home with that. If it hadn't been for my parents' support, you know, the real moral support they gave, and the explanations they gave, and preparations they made for potential experiences of this kind in the future, all during the war - if it hadn't been for that it would have been quite a serious thing.

I had tremendous confidence in my parents and tremendous confidence in their values, and in what they stood for. The big event, of course, after the war was the Russian Revolution. When the split took place within the Socialist Party my parents moved with the left group into the first Communist Party in 1919. In that period I was in high school, and I recall many meetings that took place in our home. Meetings were held in homes because they couldn't get halls. It was the period of the Palmer raids.

A sidelight here is that the organizer of the Communist Party in California in those days was Bertram Wolfe. He later became a very prominent Trotskyite. He now is an old man and is at the Hoover Library on War, Revolution and Peace.

Ken: Let's go back to your Helena Schwalbe.

Lam; She was a sister of my father's mother. One of ten sisters. There were no sons in that family. Together with three other sisters she migrated to Boston sometime in the 1860's or 1870's. This Aunt Helena had determined that she was going to have a career and she was one of the first women to enter the field of nursing at a time when Florence Nightengate started and the nurses first became a profession for women

Lam: to enter. She did this all her life. Politically she went further to the left than anyone else in her family. She was an anarchist of the Johann Most School.

Ken: How did she practice her anarchy, or do you know?

Lam: Actually she didn't do anything much except that she agreed with their approach to society and to the solution of problems. She was too busy being a nurse and following her career. I never knew of any particular activities and I don't think my father did. My father maintained a relationship with her of a very close nature until her death. She was always very thoughtful at Christmas time with the children and all.

Ken: Were you going to say something about your grandmother being a midwife?

Lam: Yes. This was in the Islands. [Hawaiian] There were no doctors and it became obvious that some form of self help had to be developed among the Germans in the German community. My grandmother had brought with her from Europe a large collection of herbs. She was interested in the medicinal use of herbs when she was still in Germany, and aligned herself with a Chinese grocer who was also a herbalist. Between the two of them they became sort of the medical center of the town of Lihue on Kawai. She became a midwife, and was paid by the families who hired her for that purpose. It was motivated partially out of humanitarian needs, but also because it meant increasing the income of the family and make possible their dream of coming to California.

She was a woman of great stamina and great courage, which I think revealed itself all the way through. One of her earliest experiences was on the ship when they were going from Bremen to the Islands. There was a doctor on the ship. Measels broke out among the children. His treatment was to wrap them up in wet sheets. Some fifty two babies died. My mother got the measels, and my grandmother took her up on deck out of the hold, where the passengers were forced to live and where the contamination was, and kept her up on the deck with the other two children during the rest of the voyage. They lived up

Lam: there. And since my grandmother wouldn't permit the treatment of having wet sheets the baby survived. She was only two months old. The trip took six months and my grandmother's action was considered defiant as she flew in the face of the medical authority. I think it is evidence of her resourcefulness and courage.

Ken: We stopped with your school experiences. What was your relationship with your sister?

Lam: My relationship with my sister was quite close when we were children. We had one other great benefit when we were young. One of the things my parents were tremendously interested in was they liked nature. They liked being out of doors. And my father was also a charter member of the San Francisco Branch of the Natur Freunde, a movement called the Nature Friends. They formed a chapter of this which is still in existence. Their club house is near Muir Woods in Marin County. So we grew up with a great appreciation of nature. We went hiking a great deal. I remember everything about Marin County.

My parents built a little two room shack over there. We spent all of our vacations there from the time I was six until I was about twenty two years old, until I got involved in the Communist movement. This afforded us a great deal of time with my mother who was a great pal. So Rosalie and I were quite close in our young days. I think our divergence came later when I became more active in the Communist movement and she was much slower and much later in moving in that direction. There were other differences. She raised a family. I didn't have children. So our lives are different.

Ken: This experience you had during the war was when you were in grade school?

Lam: Yes. It went over into high school a little bit, but not very much because the war was settled then. The war was over.

Ken: Can you tell me a little bit about your high school experiences?

Lam: Well, I attended the High School of Commerce, which was a decision made by the family because they could not afford to send me to college, which I wanted to do. But they couldn't do it, and I had a choice of becoming a secretary or a teacher,

Lam: for which, in those days, you went to normal school for two years. I didn't want to become a teacher because I was turned off by my teachers through my experience at school. So willy-nilly I had to go to the High School of Commerce to become a secretary. And my high school work was largely for that purpose. I learned shorthand and typing, although I took English, Spanish and chemistry, and went through all of mathematics from algebra to calculus. I graduated from high school with probably about two credits short for college, but I had to go to work. It was economically necessary.

Ken: Did your mother work?

Lam: No. My mother helped my father in the bakery. My father finally went into the small bakery business himself sometime before World War I, and he had a series of small bakeries. He would work in them for about five years, sell out, and take off a year; then go back into another bakery somewhere else, and so forth. He was always in San Francisco, and my mother helped him a great deal.

Ken: What happened when he took off a year?

Lam: One year we went to the Hawaiian Islands. We were taken out of school. My mother wanted us to see the Islands. I was then eleven years old. My sister was nine. We spent two months over there. We went by ship and came back by ship. That was 1916.

Otherwise we usually spent quite a lot of time in Marin County. One year we made a cross-country trip in a car to visit my father's cousins in Boston.

Later in life my father bought the Mountain Home on the side of Mount Tamalpais. He was there for eighteen years before his retirement. This was the place where the hikers stopped for sandwiches, lemonade, etcetera.

Ken: Tell me a little bit about the socialist thinking in the home when you were young. Were you involved in any way?

Lem: There was always the discussions. The family got together. By the family I mean my grandparents, the two uncles on my mother's side, and of course my mother and father. They were usually weekly gatherings, dinner at somebody's house. There was always discussion. There were two areas of reminiscence engaged in a great deal by my

Lam: mother's family. One was the memories of Hawaii when they were children. There was a whole family folklore about that, and a great deal of laughter. There were stories. The other area was the earthquake because we had lived through the earthquake and fire. I was a year old when the earthquake took place. My father had been commandeered by the army under martial law to bake bread, because that was one of the ways in which they took care of people. They got free bread. And there were experiences of the period immediately following the earthquake.

Ken: Tell me a bit about it. Do you remember anything?

Lam: I remember quite a lot from hearsay. I was born on Linden Street, which is a little alley in Hayes Valley. My father was working in a bakery on Hayes Street at the time. A week before the earthquake my family had moved out to Capp Street, Capp and Twenty-second, where my sister was ultimately born. We were living in a flat on the first floor of a building that had three of these railroad flats.

The morning that the earthquake took place my father was already at work. It was 6 A.M. or something, but he had to go to work at 4. He rode from Twenty-second and Capp over to Hayes on a bicycle. When the earthquake took place he was in the basement of the bakery. They realized instantly that it was a very severe earthquake and of course the fires started all around. So his employer gave him permission to go home to see about the family. As he was crossing Market Street on his bicycle, they had already established martial law. The army came in immediately. And he was stopped on his way home and asked where he was going and what he was doing. He explained he was on his way home from his job. "What do you do?" "A baker." So they let him go home, but they gave him a place that he had to report to in order to, with others, bake bread to meet the food emergency that developed.

At home the chimney in the building, which went up through three flats, collapsed. The kitchen was filled with soot. My mother walked in there in the dark and she felt this substance around her ankles which didn't feel like water, but was definitely something. There was a foot of soot on the floor in the kitchen. I slept through

Lam: apparently. My mother, of course, was extremely frightened. Everybody went out in the streets. Her neighbors, who knew she was alone with a baby, saw to it that she got out in the streets. My father got there and found us out on the street.

They immediately went to where my grandparents lived, Mission and Twenty-eighth, where my grandfather had a small tobacco and cigar store. That building is still there. My grandparents lived above the little business. They had already moved out into the streets. In fact the impulse that everybody had was they moved into the streets.

Within the next few days there were a lot of aftershocks. But the biggest thing was of course the fire and the way it spread, and the effort to contain the fires.

Of course they also went searching for bodies. For instance, there was a hotel at Twenty-second and Mission - a three story hotel which was just swallowed up, just sank into the ground because underneath there was a stream which starts up here in Glen Park, which is still here and still underground. In fact Safeway built a big store down at Thirtieth and Mission several years ago and the foundation kept collapsing. And they finally had to put in a big conduit to make the stream go through so it wouldn't undermine that building. That was the stream that went under this hotel. And it just sunk right down and people had to come up three stories and walk out of the top story into the street.

There was a great deal of devastation of that type all through the central Mission. Of course, because my parents and grandparents were living in that area, they were very close to those stories. They had stories about the sidewalk opening up and big crevacis appearing, which stories were told from the time I could understand anything, so that when I was two and three years old I was afraid to walk on the sidewalk because I could see the cracks on the sidewalk, and I was afraid they would open up. There was a constant discussion that went on about the earthquake and fire.

My parents finally bought a little place out here on Joost Avenue. There was a little house in the back, a three room house at the end of the lot which is still there and which my grandparents later lived in. They moved away from Capp

Lam: Street within a year after the earthquake. My sister was born, and they moved out here to what was known as the SunnySide District.

During the earthquake all this area out here, which is now the Outer Mission, was occupied by artichoke and cabbage farms. And there was a little railroad that ran through this that came in from Third and Townsend and went all the way down to Santa Cruz. For long years they kept the franchise as a freight line.

In the immediate post earthquake period the red light district of San Francisco moved out into this area where these vegetable gardens were and set up tent colonies for the prostitutes. My father became aware of this and, when they were recruiting workers to do work during the baking of bread and so on, he told some of the army men that there was this whole colony out in the outer Mission. He called attention to that fact, and they broke it up. Not that they broke it up for good. They moved elsewhere in town. But there were stories like that.

He remembered seeing someone in their nightclothes dragging a grand piano up Market Street. People trying to save some of their treasures. It was a very hectic period. But the reconstruction took place very quickly.

It was a period when he was very active in the Socialist Party and in the Bakers Local. Jack London had written his Call of the Wild and sold it for Twenty dollars. He came to the Socialist headquarters (the Bakers Local had their headquarters in the same building) and threw a big dinner with the twenty dollars. They made a great big pot of stew for everybody who came in, and London was the host.

Then London was going up to Alaska and tried to persuade my father to go with him. But he didn't go. This was before I was born. And I think that I wouldn't have been here if he had gone. He had just gotten married, and felt responsible toward his new wife.

Ken: The Workingman's Party. Was it during that period? Jack London belonged to that, didn't he?

Lam: Yes. I think it was the predecessor. I don't think you could call it a front for the Socialist Party. I don't know what the relationship was between the Socialist party and the Workingman's Party.

Ken: I was curious about the anti-Chinese element in California labor history. Did it exist in the Socialist Party? *

Lam: It was there, and it grew out of the fact that there was all this slander about the Chinese. There was definitely a racial overtone to some of their positions. I think there was anti Semitism too. I don't have any clear evidence of that. But it was certainly there in the German party in Germany. And I am sure that it came here too. Some light may be thrown on this in Richmond's [Al Richmond's book, A Long View From the Left] review of the Socialist development in the United States. It was natural, I think, that all the progressive German immigrants or the Germans that were influenced by the Socialist ideology, should gravitate to the Socialist Party in the United States because it was under the leadership of Germans for a long time. They were the main leaders.

Ken: Did you, as children, sit in on any of the Socialist meetings?

Lam: Yes. We were taken to meetings. We were taken to many of the political meetings during the election period when Debs [Eugene] was running

There was one series of meeting which I remember very clearly because it is something I hark back to even to this day. It was one of the motivating factors for my having gone into the study of the natural sciences. There was a man named Maynard Shipley who was a scientist and an astronomer, the husband of Miriam Allen De Ford. And he gave the series for the Socialist Party at that time during the years of 1910 to 1916 - up to the war, and possibly during the time of the war. And he gave a series of lectures on astronomy, the earliest discoveries of the nebula, the Milky Way. We were very young then. But I remember them very distinctly, the pictures, the drawings, the slides, and the things he described. The whole series of lectures fit into the general ideas my father projected of a socialist world and understanding your world. You know,

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* Interview made error in dates. The Workingmen's Party existed in the 1870's. There was a Socialist Workingmen's Party in 1876 which changed to the Socialist Labor Party a few years later.

Lam: it strengthened the Darwinian theory that they were all very much imbued with, and the whole concept of no God. It was anti-religious in effect. Shipley's astronomy was evidence against all the religious concepts of the creation of the world and the creation of the universe.

I remember my childhood as being that kind of atmosphere where there was this overriding love of nature, a great sense of freedom. My father, for example, had an idea he kept until the day he died. He thought that bread should be as free as air - that people should get free bread. He constantly would say, "The day will come". He would constantly outline that.

One other big influence was Edward Bellamy's book, Looking Backward, which was supposed to take place at some future time, and which looked back - being from Bellamy's point of view, the transition from capitalism to socialism. That was a favorite book in our household, and I read it when I was quite young. I don't know whether I was ten or eleven years old when I was reading it. And Upton Sinclair was another man whose writings were always in our library, especially the books about the stockyards. London's Iron Heel was virtually a textbook.

Ken: Do you remember any of your parents friends?

Lam: Their closest friends were all of the same persuasion. They were all German-Americans. They all became citizens. They were all craftsmen like painters, carpenters, master mechanics, ironworkers, printers and sausage makers.

You see the birth of the AF of L [American Federation of Labor] took place in the 1890's and the early part of the twentieth century. There was a kind of a ferment of this.

I remember Oleta [O'Connor Yates] telling about this. She was born here too, and her father was active in unions in that same period here in San Francisco. The Irish, Italians and the Germans were the biggest ethnic groups, outside of the Chinese, which later developed into one of the biggest. The Germans didn't live in proscribed communities as much as the Italians and the Irish attempted to. The Irish were in the Mission, and the Italians were in the Outer Mission and North Beach. But these

Lam: three groupings (you come across it time and again) their influence is seen in many of the unions to this day. The Irish and the Italians were, of course, more powerful.

Ken: What I meant was, your mother and father were in the Socialist Party. Did you meet Debs or any others?

Lam: I heard Debs. There was a woman, Kate Richards O'Hare. Have you ever heard of her?

Ken: Oh yes indeed. What did you think about her?

Lam: I thought she was great. We admired her very much.

Ken: Elaborate a little bit - why?

Lam: Well, she was a woman. That was important. I can't remember the circumstances under which we heard her. I remember a number of times I heard her when I was younger. But then, later, when the Communist movement developed, she was active then. She came down from Washington. That's where she lived. But she was here in the twenties. In the early twenties she was here in California and spoke at meetings. She was a very articulate woman, and also very courageous. I know she was very prominent in many ways. I think she worked - even had some government positions. But I don't know exactly where.

Ken: We have a little while yet. Let's go back to your high school days. We went through them pretty quickly. Tell me something about your friends, or what you did outside of school, or anything about that period in your life.

Lam: I think outside of high school our main activity was with the Nature Friends. During that time I was already connected with some of the youth activities around the Communist movement. When I was thirteen or fourteen they developed a youth group.

My closest friend was Grace Maul, who became Grace Granich, the sister-in-law of Mike Gold. She was married to Mike Gold's brother. She is no longer alive. She was working then with Scott Nearing. She lived in California. She was a friend of my mothers. She was just

Lam: between my mother and me in age. She became my closest friend. She really was, I think, sort of a decisive factor in keeping me in the leftward direction. We were active in meetings for suffrage, for the right to vote.

When I was that age I went to some meetings for the right for women to vote. Anita Whitney was active, although she was not yet in the Communist movement.

Grade had classes for this group of children. None of that remained very much, but her friendship was very important.

I spent a great deal of time over at the Muir Woods house with the Nature Friends. The Nature Friends organized what they called a Junior Section of the young people up to the age of about twenty or twenty two. They took them in from about fifteen. They had a lot of hiking activities, the kind of activities the Sierra Club goes in for now. I became the secretary of the Junior Section.

I attempted to bring some of my knowledge about Socialism and my ideas about it to the Junior Section of the Nature Friends. But they resisted anything of a political nature because they were a hiking organization strictly with an element of social-democratic ideology because many of the members had been Social-Democrats in Europe before they came here. Many of them were Socialists too. And many of them maintained a liberal attitude right to the time of their death with regard to all political developments.

I can remember many of my family's friends. I know them even now. There are some people who are still alive. And the in-laws always voted the most progressive way. They went along with the left wing movement - anti fascist. During the period before the war, when Hitler came to power in Germany, they were all anti-fascist. In fact the whole organization was.

The left anti-fascists among the Germans in New York launched the "German-American", a small paper that was in German and English geared to working against Hitlerism. It was part of the whole united front tactic- the popular front tactic. This was the paper that Margrit Pittman edited. My mother became the San Francisco agent for that paper.

Lam: She had almost one hundred subscribers to it here in San Francisco. Most of them came from this group that my parents had known through the period of the Socialist Party, and when the left broke off a very few of them went with my parents into the Communist Party. But they maintained their relationship through the Nature Friends, and maintained that kind of an alliance.

Of course, when the anti-fascist movements developed all over the world, and in World War II, some of these people (even in middle age) went to work in the shipyards. Some of the women did too. Because by then they were totally convinced of the correctness of the United States being in that war against Hitler. They knew what the devastation of that could be in Germany. And they they had some ties with the German underground too; not of any viable nature. But they did get material from the German underground. They got all kinds of leaflets, booklets, and things like that. The illegal stuff that was published by the German underground in Germany was brought into this country and widely disseminated amongst the German Americans, particularly amongst those of anti-fascist persuasion.

Ken: We have to get back to suffrage. You were a very young girl. What did the young girls do in the suffrage movement?

Lam: More or less just attend. We talked about it a great deal. They didn't have us do anything much. When I became twenty-one years old I had the right to vote. That period (I don't remember the year the right to vote was passed)* It came in the period I had contact with it, when we were in that. Anita Whitney was a big spark plug in this area. There was a lot of agitation. There was a lot of the usual thing, or meetings and so on. We didn't have any demonstrative action that I can remember.

Ken: Was it just you and your friends, or was it an organized group?

Lam: There was an organized group which touched us. We weren't the initiators of it. It was something that drew us to it. It was much broader than the socialist movement.

Ken: Did you join the group?

Lam: No. I went to meetings and carried it back to the things I belonged to.

Ken: Tell me about some of the meetings.

 *The Women's Suffrage Amendment was passed June 4, 1919. (Incidentally, a huge campaign in California was successful in winning the vote for women as early as 1911.)

Lam: I can't remember them. They are sort of blurred in my memory as distinct from other meetings. I remember we went to all kinds of meetings at the time of the revolution in Russia. There was all kinds of help given, financial aid, material aid, and so on.

During the war there was a lot of propaganda for the rights of women to vote. Because of the national character of this movement (it had it's main seat in New York, I think, and in Washington, and on the Atlantic Coast), our actions out here seem to me, as I recall it, being more or less in support of what they were doing. There was more demonstrative action like parades and demonstrations. I was sort of, you might say, on the periphery of that, gathering it up and taking it in; feeling very strong about it as an issue. I remember that - that I felt very strongly about the right of women to vote. In fact I had arguments with my uncle about it. One of them used to say I was going to be a lawyer because I outsmarted him. I was just a kid, but I felt so strongly the question of women's equality.

I have to say that my mother was the same way. It rubbed off. Mother just idolized Rosa Luxemburg in a romantic kind of way. I could see later, much later, that it was romantic. It wasn't based in the theoretical work that Rosa Luxemburg was doing. I mean if her work is reviewed now it is obvious that in many, many things she was closest to a woman theoretician with power and leadership that I think the early communist movement ever had, including Russia. She didn't agree with Lenin on many things. But some of the things that she did come up with, especially there was an international discussion about the question of relationship between the struggle for immediate issues, like wages or better conditions, and the fight for socialism. Now this is a problem that has affected the whole communist movement all over the world ever since the beginning, and the socialist party too.

Ken: Did the Socialist Party agree with the women's fight for the vote?

Lam: Yes. It was one of the planks in their platform.

Ken: Do you think they had any decisive influence?

Lam: I don't think so. I think that it was helpful, but they were not that powerful. The suffrage movement was largely middle class women, and they didn't appeal to the workingclass or to organized labor. I don't think they saw the role of organized labor, even in those days, because later it grew to greater dimensions. But even in those days the Gompers movement was the beginning of the American Federation of Labor, and then the period of Foster's [William Z.] coming into the railroad industry. I don't think they saw that.

I remember the way Anita used to talk about it afterwards. This is one of the criticisms she had to make after she came to the left and into the communist movement - that the suffrage movement was aloof from the labor movement.

The Socialist Party (which garnered about twelve million votes in 1912) was a help to them. But I don't think it was a decisive thing. It is interesting, however, that there was this overlapping.

I think in my mind the question was so great because I was growing up. I was going to be twenty one soon, and I wanted the right to vote. This was a great compulsion, and it seemed to me to have a relationship to all the other things, all the things my family believed in. We were a very close family. Otherwise I don't think this would have happened. There was no rebellion on my part against the teachings, against the concepts of socialism. There was rebellion on my part finally, which didn't come very early, which came to other people much younger in life, of separating myself and getting out on my own away from my family.

I was very close to my mother and father. But my mother more than anything, I guess. She was not very helpful when it came to the question of maturing as a woman, growing up and so on. She would not, for instance, discuss sex with us. This was a taboo subject. I was curious and I read a great deal. I was a heavy reader. In fact,

Lam: somebody warned my parents that I was reading too much when I was about fifteen or sixteen. And I read a great deal about this. I can remember asking her - I wanted to discuss it with her. She would not. So I was totally unprepared, in a way, totally unprepared for being a mature woman, in the female sense.

Tape Two 5/27/76

Ken: We have gotten up to your graduation. There is one question I want to ask. You mentioned you had some desire to be something else besides a secretary or a school teacher. Why was your desire to go to college stopped?

Lam: First, my desire to go to college was a desire for greater knowledge. My parents couldn't send me to college at that point. It was economically unfeasible.

Ken: Then there is a contradiction in my mind. Your father had stores for five years or so, and then took a year off. If he had wanted you to go to college, why didn't he work that year?

Lam: It's two things. At the time I graduated from high school he was in the throes of one business. He was in it two or three years. His taking the year off was either much earlier or much later. During that period he was not in a position to do that, to meet the requirement of college. Of course they saw it as a five year obligation.

It is interesting because my sister, when she graduated, did have five years of art school, four years of which they paid for and a year which she won on a scholarship. So that was only two years later.

Ken: So you never thought of going to college after you started to work?

Lam: No. I think mainly because I was working. I started to work as soon as I got out of high school. I liked the independence of that. I was in the throes of separating myself from my family. When I got to be twenty-two I was married.

Ken: When did you graduate from high school?

Lam: I graduated, it seems to me, in 1922.

Ken: Did you get a job immediately?

Lam: Yes. I got it through an employment agency. It was secretary to a firm that sold (they manufactured elsewhere) recording thermometers for dairies and kilns and things of that sort. I wasn't there very long. Then I got a job in an insurance company. It was automobile insurance. I worked there for approximately four years.

Lem: What did you do those years, outside of work?

Lam: I joined the Young Workers League, which was the predecessor of the Young Communist League. And I was in the Young Workers League until I joined the Communist Party, which was in 1930. I attended classes and things of that kind.

During those years I was also in the junior section of the Nature Friends, participating in many of their High Sierra trips with them.

It was during this period that I met the president of the senior section of the Nature Friends. He was a recent immigrant from Germany. He was a veteran on the German side of the war and a Social Democrat. When he came to the United States he joined the Nature Friends. I don't remember or know whether he belonged to this organization in Europe, because it did exist in Europe too. He became the president. And in the period of time in which we had these high Sierra trips (we would go on two or three week pack trips) we got acquainted, and in 1928 we got married.

Ken: What did you do as a member of the Young Workers League besides attend classes? Was there any activity involved?

Lam: Yes there was - activity and distributing leaflets. Among these I had one experience that was an indication of the symptoms, the isolation, and the wrong positions taken by the Communists in the early twenties. I was once with another girl distributing leaflets to the National Guard. The National Guard met at the armory at Sixteenth and Valencia. The leaflet we had said something at the top about "turning your guns against your officers", a complete steal from the early Soviet - the Soviets getting the army to turn against their officers and join the revolution of the workers and peasants. Naturally we were arrested. We got into court on this. The young woman who was with me was very short. The judge looked over the top of the lectern and couldn't even see her. He only saw me. He read the leaflet out loud and said, "These girls obviously don't know what they are doing", and dismissed the case. I thought this was a classic example of the wrong kind of thing. We did a lot of that.

Also the Communist movement, at that time, was embroiled in a very intensive internal factional struggle. The leaders of the two groups were - on the one side Jay Lovestone, and on the other William Z. Foster. This involved also

Lam: the young people. Those of us in the Young Workers League also became involved in this. And everyone was more or less persuaded to take one position or the other. It was so much of a formative period for the Communist movement that the constant factional struggle seemed to be part of an effort to grow into an organization with an orientation toward the American working class, and with a solution of the problems of leadership. With the unfolding of the 1929 economic crisis in the United States, reality forced a resolution of this inner party struggle. And the resolution came, unfortunately, from a source from outside our country. The source was a commission from the Communist International in which Stalin himself played a very significant role.

The American Communists during that time didn't do anything in the nature of struggle, in the nature of organization, or anything that had a direct contact with American workers. The party itself was made of mainly of foreign born people. I don't think they had more than about eighty in the City of San Francisco. The young section were many of the offspring of the adult section - or the offspring of those, like myself, came into it from the Socialist movement prior to 1919.

Ken: What side were you on, Foster or Lovestone?

Lam: I ended up on the Lovestone side. It didn't really make any difference which side you were on. My whole branch of the Young Workers League was on the Lovestone side.

Ken: Can you briefly tell me the difference between the Lovestone and the Foster sides?

Lam: Yes. Foster's position was one of concentrating on workingclass people, on the unions, somewhat akin to syndicalism. Lovestone's position was more in the direction of political education, education for socialism, reaching out toward the population which was not regarded by the Foster group as the kind that would be the backbone of a genuine Communist Party movement. It was a struggle for an identification of the American Party with the Soviet Party which became stronger with the Foster position. This does not mean that Lovestone's position was correct. The factional situation in itself made growth of the Communist Party impossible. It was deeply destructive.

Ken: Is that when you were still in the Young Workers League? They didn't kick you out?

Lam: No. They didn't. They didn't go to that extent because we were not decisive people at all. We were just followers. They kicked out leaders. They took out about two hundred leaders from the party itself. The Young Workers League was left pretty much as it was. It didn't come under the axe, so to speak - no matter what position you had.

Ken: Let's go back to your marriage then. You were still working. F. was also working?

Lam: Yes. He was in the printing trades.

Ken: One more thing. You got married when you were twenty-two and left home. What was the reaction of your parents to this? Did they like F.? Were they upset about your being married?

Lam: I had been going with Fred something like two years before we eloped. It was a great shock to my mother. I did it that way because I couldn't get agreement from her on anything. She was absolutely opposed to it. She didn't like him. She was opposed to my marrying at that time. So, when I left the City, we went to Carmel and got married in Monterey. I no sooner got there than I got a telegram from my sister telling me to come home because my mother was very ill. She was ill with hysteria. I ignored this telegram. I did not go home. When we got home there was complete acceptance of the fact that I had married, and reconciliation with the idea that it was Fred. I said formerly

that I was somewhat unprepared for being a full-fledged female. I had very little understanding and very little education on the whole question of what marriage was, or what sexual relation was, and its relationship to love, and so on. I don't think that I was passionately in love to begin with. And my marriage was partly an expression of my desire to get away from home. F. was a very nice person, and I had a lot of affection for him. Much later I realized that I did not really and passionately love him. We had our first problem before our marriage when I said I was going to continue working, and he was very upset at that. A wife wasn't supposed to work. My response was that I wasn't going to let any man support me. So there was a point there where we had had a considerable conflict. It was finally resolved by my continuing to work.

Lam: I remained on the job. The other area where we had problems (not waiting until our marriage day, because we did have sexual relations before our marriage) - there we had real difficulty. It came out of my immaturity, my lack of knowledge. And coupled with this his sort of overwhelming eagerness to satisfy himself. I realized that this was a symptom of a good deal of selfishness. Despite this I tried hard to make a go of it, and I think he did too. We actually remained married for six years. In that course of time I had joined the party and became active in the party. He finally also joined the party and became active.

Ken: Did you join the party as a graduate from the Young Workers League, or how did you go about it?

Lam: Yes. I think it should be said that I was in the Young Workers League.

When we got married we did take a trip. We went on a high Sierra trip for our honeymoon.

The following year, early in 1929, we took a trip to Mexico, spent two or three months in Mexico. From there we went to Havana, went to Key West, and up the Atlantic Coast. When our money gave out we worked in New York. We were in contact with the Nature Friends in New York. I did not contact the communist movement in New York except for Grace Granich who was living there. We saw each other socially, and also she joined us in many of our hikes around the New York area.

We came back into San Francisco in November of 1929, and I think it was almost immediately that I joined the Communist party. That gap of almost a year broke my relationship with the Young Workers League. So I joined the Communist Party, and after a few months of working for the Radio Corporation of America I went to work for the party as a secretary.

Ken: Who asked you to go to work there?

Lam: The organizer then was William Simon who was the district organizer. It was at his request that I came to work as a secretary.

Ken: What did the job entail?

Lam: Well, I was in charge almost immediately of membership. I became a member of the organization department. As secretary I did the correspondence

Lam: the filing, things like that, and the membership records were my responsibility.

Ken: Wasn't that a period of increasing police surveillance? Did you still keep files and records?

Lam: We had them, but they were not kept in the office. They were usually kept in some private home where we did a lot of the technical work. That was true. There was police surveillance, and we not keep things in headquarters because there was frequent breaking in and vandalism.

Ken: Can you tell me more about the break-ins?

Lam: I think they were mostly motivated by vigilantes, or little groups of that kind, or possibly even the police department. We would come into the office and find everything thrown around, strewn around. Usually there was nothing missing. Once in a while there was money, maybe ten dollars or twenties, and it would be gone. But it was probably a search for records.

Ken: Can I ask another question? It is sort of an amorphous thing. Who were the vigilantes?

Lam: There was an organization in San Francisco whose name I cannot remember. But they organized these groups. They were people that were recruited from among the unemployed, declassified elements, lumpen proletariat, and people like that. They actually had a system of putting ads in the papers asking people to get in touch with them for a job. In some instances they even offered jobs as carpenters or construction workers. Then, once they got their interview, they were involved as participants in groups of people that were used in these ways - not only against us, but against unions and so forth.

Ken: You don't know what was behind it?

Lam: Oh, there were various rumors about it, about the Chamber of Commerce and big employers in the city, and the American Legion.

I wonder If I could give a little summary characterization of the twenties before we go into the thirties. Because this was a period. I think it will explain some of the things that happened later. It was a period when there was a great influx of settlers from other parts of the country into the West and into California, because it was a period of very intensive prosperity, particularly in industries like the oil producing industry, the orange industry, the moving picture industry, Factories were growing up everywhere and people were coming in because there were jobs to be had. There were big irrigation projects and

Lam: real estate booms, and it made California appear like it was a new El Dorado. All the cities around the Bay developed a maritime industry and manufacturing centers. And Los Angeles has its big role with oil refining, citrus crops and the moving picture industry. By 1930 the population in California had grown to something like six million people.

When the recession hit it opened up a whole new series of questions - the stock market crash, the jobless with their savings exhausted, banks closing down, bankruptcies. This gave birth to a tremendous increase in the unemployed movement. There came a great stirring up, a period of six or seven years that just exploded with the action of the people and the action of the unemployed workers in trying to get some sort of relief from the situation that they faced. The main character of these actions took were hunger marches. They began in 1932, although in 1930 there was a great demonstration in March. On March 6th, 1930, there was an international demonstration against unemployment. Every country that was affected by the economic crises had this happen. San Francisco had one of the largest of anywhere in the country.

Bill Simon, who was the organizer, was the main speaker there in the Civic Center, and hundreds of people joined the Communist Party as a result of the appeal that was made there, even though they could not be absorbed by the organization which was still these small groups of foreign born members. This demonstration was the predecessor of the hunger marches which came later. The first significant one was in January of 1932 in Sacramento. This was accompanied by arrests. In Los Angeles the Chamber of Commerce led the arrests and arrested hundreds of people. In this particular hunger march there were some 60,000 people who participated in electing over 500 delegates who were going to go to Sacramento. In San Francisco the march up Market Street involved 100,000 people 25,000 of which listened to speakers and 5,000 of which went to Sacramento.

Unemployed Councils were the organizations which brought the people all together. Broad masses of people, including whole families. One of the things they did besides participating in these hunger marches, which centered around the demand for unemployment insurance, was that they fought evictions. In San Francisco there was one eviction every forty-five minutes. The Unemployed Councils were organized on a neighborhood basis and were fighting these evictions. The way they did it was they just took the furniture and brought it right back

Lam: into the flat or apartment, and tried to prohibit or prevent an actual eviction from being consummated. They won in a great many cases.

In December of 1932 there was a national hunger march. In January of 1933 there was another state hunger march, and on March 4th, 1933, there was an international unemployment day where the main concept was to fight for a bill for providing unemployment insurance. There were some 10,000 people participating in San Francisco. I am giving all these facts and the dates because I think it authenticates the kind of struggle that went on - the actual things that happened. Along with this, in the same period, there was a huge veterans' bonus march on Washington in July of 1932. This was added to by groups of ex-servicemen, coming from all over the nation, going to Washington. This was a great difficulty because the expense of getting to Washington from California was enormous. We succeeded in getting a great many people to go. As you may remember, there was a murderous attack against the veterans in Washington with the cavalry, the infantry, machine guns, tanks, ammunition, and gas bombs all involved. There were many killed and many injured.

Ken: I have heard a lot about the unemployed councils. Can you tell me what germinated them, how they got started; why they were so popular; what part you had in this - all these questions?

Lam: The first thing - I think the fact that there was an economic crises and everybody was unemployed and there were breadlines and things like that - people in the neighborhoods that had any contact with each other, of the unemployed, sort of gravitated toward each other. The members of our organization, the Communist Party, who lived all over town, lived in some of these areas where centers developed, centers of activity. When the hunger marches were organized (which were mainly stimulated and encouraged by the Communist Party at their inception) in many neighborhoods both the members of the party and others of their neighbors, associates, and union members, got together first of all in small groups. They organized neighborhood contingents to participate in the hunger marches. Findally, on the basis of this experience, they developed the Unemployed Councils for a neighborhood - one for the Mission, one for the Fillmore, one for North Beach, and elsewhere, all over town.

Lam: Members of the Communist Party were all very active in these organizations. But the leadership of these organizations moved very quickly into broader channels where non communists became officers and leaders of the Unemployed Councils, which was absolutely imperative. Otherwise the organization would not have been able to do what it did. These hunger marches took tremendous energy, and it meant organization of almost military character to get the contingents to march to separate places and then to move on up to Sacramento from all over the State of California. And they were so rapid. They followed each other so quickly that the Unemployed Councils seemed to be constantly in a state of organizing for some sort of action. Out of this ferment I think there were many, many people, some of which to this day can point out that they came to the progressive movement, to the communist movement, to the trade union movement, through the Unemployed Councils.

Ken: What other things did the Unemployed Councils do beside organize the hunger marches?

Lam: Fighting evictions was one way. They also got people on relief. They also got relief increased in many instances. There were constant delegations going to the proper authorities for that kind of thing with families, specific individual families. And all kinds of committees did things of that kind. They had committees on eviction. They had committees on relief. They had committees that approached the trade unions in the neighborhood and approached other organizations as well.

Ken: What did you, as a Communist Party member, do during this period, individually and as a member of the organization committee?

Lam: In view of the fact that I was a member of the organization committee I was considered at that time more or less one of the official representatives of the party. And, since I was responsible for the membership part of it, my concentration was in trying to recruit people into the party from among the unemployed, and making them feel that they could be a part of the Communist Party movement which entailed more than the struggle for the immediate needs of the unemployed.

We were also concerned with classes on socialism, classes on the Soviet Union as being an example of socialism in action, and other questions of this kind. We were concerned with the position of the Negro people in the country, and were developing our own policies with regard to

Lam: the black people. And this entailed education in that direction. Therefore I was very much involved in what you might say the internal problems of the party, and making it possible for new members to be brought into the party, to be integrated and become regular members and understand the principles of what we stood for.

We had conventions and we developed programs and we developed activities. I participated in all the demonstrations just as did other members of the party, and even attended many meetings of the unemployed councils as a spectator, or even as a participant, in my own neighborhood. I think this was characteristic of what party people did, even though they were employed. There was a great deal of assistance given to the unemployed and to not only the unemployed, but the workers ex-servicemen's league, and later (when the agricultural strikes developed) to the agricultural strikers as well.

Ken: Were you involved in any of the demonstrations where the police attacked the demonstrators?

Lam: I was arrested at one point in 1933 while I was speaking at a meeting on the waterfront. I was running for the Board of Supervisors. Is there anything else in regard to that?

Ken: No, I think that about covers it. I don't think that information is available anywhere else. That's why I wanted to know about it.

Lam: Well, the other big thing, one of the other things that took place in this period, was the agricultural strikes. In agriculture there was no organization at all for the agricultural workers. One of the earliest attempts to organize the agricultural workers took place in the Imperial Valley in 1928, and again in 1932, stimulated once more by the fact that the communist party felt that agriculture in California was very important and that it was necessary to find some avenues toward organizing into union organization the agricultural field workers. So there were a group of people who volunteered to go down into the Imperial Valley to organize the agricultural workers. They were arrested and charged with criminal syndicalism (which is the law that was carried back to World War I, at the time directed against the IWW). Here it was resurrected and directed against the people in the Imperial Valley. This, however, signaled the beginning of organization and strike struggle because these

Lam: workers were extremely badly paid. And in 1932 the upheaval of strikes in the valley began. Actually from 1932 to 1934 there were a whole wave of agricultural strikes.

Ken: What organization did these people belong to, who were organizing the agricultural workers?

Lam: First of all they belonged to the Trade Union Educational League, which was an organization trying to spread education about the need for unionization; and they did concentrate on the agricultural workers, among others, at that time. The T.U.E.L. later became the Trade Union Unity League. Their concept of their work was expanded to bring about unity between different branches of the labor movement, not only for education in the trade unions, but to bring about united action on the issues which faced the labor movement and the workers. They were instrumental in starting and giving impetus to the particular union which became very active, very outspoken, and very articulate in the course of the agricultural strikes. That was the Cannery and Agricultural Workers.

Ken: Was this a national organization?

Lam: It started here. The TUEL and the TUUL were national in scope, but the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Union started in California, with some manifestations elsewhere in the country. But it did start here with these strikes.

Ken: You were going to mention the various strikes that took place, or some of them.

Lam: I would like to mention some of the crops which gives you the scope of this movement. It started off with the pea pickers in Half Moon Bay. Then the celery workers in San Diego; the lettuce workers in San Jose and Hayward; and the pea pickers again in San Luis Obispo; the raspberry and potato pickers in Los Angeles; the cherry pickers in Santa Clara Valley; strawberries, melons and apricots in Contra Costa; peach canners, melons in Arizona; and beets (where the Filipino workers were involved for the first time in a great big way), the grapes and the peaches. In 1933 the strikes swept throughout the state in all of these crops. Then came in August the biggest strike of all, which was the cotton strike which involved thousands and thousands of workers, a solid strike covering one hundred thousand acres of cotton. In the course of that strike there

Lam: were not only arrests, but vigilante action with actually several pickets murdered (that was down in the San Joaquin Valley) and, in one stance, three thousand were supposed to vacate one of the agricultural camps because they were out on a sympathy strike - pea pickers who refused to scab on the lettuce workers. They were forced out of their camps and thrown out on the highways. This was characteristic of the whole period. At one point there was an attempt to assassinate Pat Chambers, who was the top leader of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Union. In the cotton strike, the strikers won a thirty three percent raise in their wages as of October 23rd, and collective bargaining was established. Now, of course, the union did not survive because of the tremendous attempts against it all the way through.

Ken: Do you remember what wages there were, off hand?

Lam: Wages ran (I don't know what it was for the cotton pickers). I know the wages were typical of what the conditions were. For instance, the pea pickers got 30¢ an hour, and this was characteristic of many of them - 30¢ an hour or 20¢ an hour. And their demands would be very modest, another 10¢ an hour or 18¢ an hour. And in these strikes they usually managed to get some concession of improvement in their wages which were still sub-standard.

I have a quotation here from the 1934 National Labor Relations Board which is interesting. They say they found:

"Squalor. An entire absence of sanitation and a crowding of human beings into totally inadequate tents or crude structures built of boards, weeds and anything that was found at hand to give a pitiful semblance of a home at its worst."

Ken: Then these strikes evidently had some impact on the government?

Lam: They definitely did.

Ken: In what way?

Lam: They added tremendously to the aspect of pressure from the people with regard to many of the things which had to be done by the government. I think the very fact that the National Labor Relations Board investigated this whole area is important, and that they found and reported this condition, which I have just quoted, meant that the NLRB, following the setting up of this Board, did begin to turn to segments of the American people and the American working class which had not been given any attention before. And changes

Lam: began to appear in a slight way. I mean they got better. They got all kinds of things of this nature. I think it added pressure to the general demand for unemployment insurance. It helped to lay the basis for the social security act, and for many of the reforms which were adopted under the Roosevelt administration in the mid thirties. It encouraged, I think, many of the dust bowl immigrants to come out to the States, even after these agricultural strikers and after these developments. For example, in 1936, there were 100,000; in 1937 there were 100,000, but by 1938 they were coming out at 10,000 a month. And most of these dust bowl immigrants were absorbed by the agricultural fields.

Ken: In one of Steinbook's books he mentioned that dust bowl people were being kept out of California by sheriff's deputies, and so on. What about that?

Lam: I think that's true. It was the sheriff's deputies as well as some of the growers themselves who (when they felt they had enough workers) tried to get them moving elsewhere and protected their ranches and their big farms with shotguns, and so on. At the same time, a certain number of these people were absorbed into the work force into the agricultural fields because they were found to be useful in pitting against other workers the growers practiced discrimination against. There were lots of Filipino workers. There were lots of Mexican workers, and some black people. In some parts of the Imperial Valley there were even Hindus that were working as agricultural workers. One of the weapons they tried to develop against having all these people united with each other was to pit them against each other - to make one group feel it was superior to the other. And they tried this with many of the people who came in from the dust bowl. One very glorious example of how they did not succeed was the cotton strike where workers of all national groups, including those who came from Oklahoma, were united in that fight. This, of course, was a front that went all the way from Fresno to Bakersfield. This is where the picket lines were going.

Ken: A hundred miles of picket lines?

Lam: Yes. It was a tremendously broad strike. And there the unity was exceptionally good. That explains why there was a victory. It also explains why the leadership of the union was

Lam: arrested enmasse and charged with criminal syndicalism - the arrests out of which came the famous criminal syndicalism trial which took place toward the end of 1934.

Ken: What part did you play in this?

Lam: I had sort of a twofold responsibility within the cotton strike, which took place in the Fall of 1933. As a sympathetic organization the Communist Party (and by then it had a newspaper of its own - the Western Worker) was engaged in collecting and sending relief to the strikers - food, blankets, clothing, and things like this - to the strikers in San Joaquin Valley. I do recall going down with one or two trucks of food and clothing and aid to the strikers. Plus the fact that we also went in there to help out in determining tactical steps; defense of those who got arrested, assistance of all kinds.

The other facet of my work there was to do what I had done in San Francisco with the unemployed; and that was gradual recruitment of people in the strike committees, and of strikers, into the Communist Party. It must be said we had very great success because of the fact that they saw the willingness and the efforts on the part of the communists to be of assistance to them and to help them. They knew that they had in their leadership one or two who were identified with the Communist Party. We called together groups of strikers and explained to them our ultimate aim. - The whole question of socialism was brought into their concept. Actually several hundred people joined the party at that time. This was a period where the strike also won support of the most diverse groups from all walks of life who responded to the needs of these workers. It was given a great deal of publicity, and their courage and determination won the respect of people in all walks of life. It was one of the periods where many of the Hollywood people came into focus and sent support and went into the fields to demonstrate their support of the cotton strikers.

Ken: As a known communist in this situation, were you accepted by and large; and in what way, if you were?

Lam: Yes, I was accepted. I might say it was demonstrated by the fact that I was very warmly greeted by everyone. And by the fact that they

Lam: invited and tolerated my presence at strike committee meetings where I listened as an auditor. I didn't participate in any other way. Also they were extremely responsive to our invitation to them to attend meetings where the communist party's ultimate program was discussed with them.

It might be added that we had one critical situation while I was in Tulare and that there was a threat to Caroline Decker who had taken Pat Chambers place as the leader of the union after Pat was arrested. With this threat of arrest to Caroline we felt we could not remain where we were staying - Caroline Decker, Emma Cutler (who represented the International Labor Defense) and I, representing the Communist Party, were all staying at the home of a comrade of ours in Tulare. So we had to search out an alternative place to stay. I approached the wife of the local Methodist minister, and it was agreed that we could stay in a guest room that she had in her home. And we did. And she saw to it that we got food, and we remained there until that critical period passed, which was a matter of two or three days.

Ken: Did her husband know this?

Lam: No, her husband did not, at her request. She wanted to spare him that knowledge. So we devised a way of getting into that guest room through a back entrance that she had.

Ken: Were there any other members of the community, outside of the strikers and this woman, who welcomed you in any way?

Lam: There were some of the small business people who had places where the strikers did all their grocery buying who were very responsive to the needs of the strikers. I don't remember anything in particular. But I do know there was an atmosphere of friendliness. I was there openly and there was no antagonism of any kind; and no move taken against my presence or that of Alex Noral who was also there as a communist leader, and who remained there after the strike was over. He was then responsible for party organization in the San Joaquin. We both had the same experience in being very graciously received by everybody, and no persecution.

Ken: This is a women's tape, so I wonder - can you remember anything about your relation to the women strikers. Was there a large percentage of women strikers? How did they accept you? How did the men accept you as a woman?

Lam: There were some women strikers. The women and children were all very active on the picket

Lam: lines and strike activities. Some of the woman did not work as agricultural workers. Some did. None of them were on the strike committee. Unfortunately there were no women on the strike committee outside of Caroline who was accepted by all of these people of every race or color completely. And I think it was the policy of the union that really attracted them, the policies, the strategy they worked out, the tactics, the courage of the people. Pat Chambers was devotedly loved. His picture was cut out of the newspapers and stuck on the inside of tents wherever you went. Caroline was equally admired and beloved by the strikers. She was a beautiful blond haired young woman, and she became kind of a heroine to everybody. It is an odd situation because there was not a mass participation by women. But there was obviously some little pride in the fact that there was a woman leader in the union. It is an isolated thing. I think it can be said that that union and many others in that period were not yet aware of the importance of involving women either as members, as officers, and so on.

Ken: I was wondering because of the Mexican workers. Women were in a different position in Mexico. What was their relationship?

Lam: The Mexican women were more active than many of the others because, I think, more of them were actually working in the fields. It was the Mexican women who were practical enough to take the relief that came in; to set up the soup kitchens; to make the meals for the strikers; for the pickers, and so forth. And they became the leaders of that. Once the trucks of food started coming in, it went right to those women. They circumvented everything. They didn't go to strike headquarters. They went right to the soup kitchen, which was sort of an open field arrangement with a roof over it. There was food being prepared and served almost on a continuous basis. This was very inspirational to see.

Ken: Did these women come to communist meetings?

Lam: Some of them did. It was more difficult with the Mexican women because they could not all speak English. We made some effort to get interpretation of what was said, but this was not totally successful. But I remember quite a few women being present. Again, I think it was sort

Lam: of a response to the fact that it was a woman who was speaking to them. The three of us who were there all felt this very much.

Ken: You knew each other, but you all represented different groups?

Lam: Yes. That was it.

Ken: Were you around when there were any arrests?

Lam: No. But I did witness one of the big mass picket lines when they had Pat Chambers speaking from the back of a truck, and where there were armed men all around. They were deputy sheriffs, and they stood with their rifles in hand around the truck. Just encircled the entire thing. Pat Chambers went right ahead and made his speech and said what he had to say without any interference at all and without any show of being conscious of this armed circle around him. It was rather tense because many of the people were very much aware of these deputies being there. It could have gone off like that. Any provocation could have set them off. It is much to Pat Chambers' credit that nothing of that kind happened.

Ken: These strikes were in 1933. You must have been around when the 1934 Maritime strike occurred.

Lam: Yes, I was.

Ken: Tell me about it.

Lam: Well, in 1933 the National Industrial Recovery Act was enacted, and there were a resurgence of the labor movement following the enactment of this act. On the San Francisco waterfront it gave impetus to an outburst of protest against the long standing grievances that the longshoremen had against the shipowners. There was an organization called the Longshoremen's Association of the Pacific which was designated as a company union. They called it the Blue Book union because of the color of the membership book. They had a system on the waterfront called the shape up system which meant they hired from the docks, forcing the longshoremen to wait for hours at a time without any compensation. And it also led to corrupt control of employment by a hiring agent from whom men had to buy their jobs. Some worked 24 to 35 hours without sleep. It was in this period that Harry Bridges came to the fore. He had been on the waterfront for some years, having come here from Australia.

Lam: And so in September, after the National Labor Relations Board was adopted, an organization was set up known as the International Longshoremen's Association, who received a charter from the I.L.A. National Organization, and ninety percent of the men joined the new union.

End of tape

Tape Three - 5/27/76

Lam: I was talking about the International Longshoremen's Association, which was formed in September, 1933. In early 1934 they had a coastwide convention where demands were formulated to correct the abuses on the docks. On March 7, 1934, they took a strike vote. On May 15, 1934, the seamen joined the strike, and the ship's clerks and the licensed organizations also joined the strike. The pickets were clubbed and gassed on July 5th, and hundreds were injured. Two waterfront picketers were killed by the police. This day got to be known as Bloody Thursday. It was an incident which swept every union in the Bay Area into the general strike. The General Strike started on July 17th and lasted until July 20th. There were 127,000 workers out on strike. This was, I think, the second general strike on record in the United States, and probably the largest. On July 20th, people started to go back to work. But the waterfront unions won agreements with the shipowners which served as a basis for labor relations in the maritime industry all over the country.

Ken: I am going to ask the obvious question. What was your relationship as a party member and an individual party worker to the strike?

Lam: In this strike I had no direct relationship as a person, as an individual. Here it was a matter of just supporting what activities could be supported from outside sources.

The Communist party was in great sympathy with the workers' struggle, and with the strike situation. But beyond that it did not take any particular action except to publicize the issues and publicize the demands of the workers through the Western Worker and giving wide distribution of this paper all over the city and among workers in general.

Ken: Kate Rodin said she was working as a secretary during that time and that the party headquarters had been moved to a restaurant on Fillmore Street; and that she had been a liaison person between the members of the party who were striking and the party. Do you know anything about that?

Lam: I am not familiar with that. That could very well have been. I was never in such a position. I think the difference may be because I was an official of the party. By that time I was in the organization department.

Ken: She worked in the organization department at that time, too, didn't she?

Lam: No. I think she was working for the trade union director. His work was somewhat different in scope. He worked with members of the trade unions and helped them. So it is very possible that her role was representing him rather than the party organization as such.

Ken: Were you on any of the picket lines, or were you downtown to see any of the activity?

Lam: I was downtown in the middle of the situation a number of times. In the earlier period, in 1933, that is when I was arrested once while I was speaking down there. I was a candidate for the Board of Supervisors, and was arrested while speaking on the waterfront. Later I was present at some of the demonstrations down on the waterfront, too, when the strike was on, when the picketers had their big mass meetings. But only as a spectator.

Ken: Do you remember anything about the city during the period of the strike?

Lam: Yes. It was like a holiday, I must say. It was a tremendous experience because everything came to a standstill. People were walking up and down Market Street in the middle of the street. There were no streetcars. There was nothing. The city came to a complete standstill except to the extent that the strike committee permitted the movement of food, medical equipment, and so forth, as it was needed in emergency situations. But beyond that there was nothing else that moved.

It was really a very inspiring demonstration of united action. I do recall that there were many reports made of the way in which the Central Labor Council came to the conclusion of calling a general strike. The Central Labor Council at that time played a very significant role in unity with the leaders of the strike itself. Harry Bridges, who attended the meetings of the Central Labor Council for purposes of coordinating their strike activities - these reports were not only in the press. They were made directly by people to our organization - people who were

Lam: directly involved in the strike and reported to the party the progress of the strike.

Ken: Were there a lot of arrests during that period?

Lam: Yes, a great many arrests. In fact there were arrests of all kinds that had no relationship to the strike itself, people who were active in unemployed work and other things of that sort. I was arrested during that period, I and Ida Rothstein and Elaine Black. I was arrested for vagrancy. Ida Rothstein and I were arrested for vagrancy in August. That was immediately following the general strike. I was then the election campaign manager of the Communist Party. I specifically had had the responsibility for the petition campaign to put the party on the ballot. But we were found not guilty.

There is a nice little story connected with that. While I was on the stand (our attorney was Leo Gallagher) the prosecuting attorney, whose name was Gillen, presented me with the words of the International and asked me to interpret this song for the benefit of the jury. And Leo Gallagher jumps up and says, "Do you want her to sing it?" And Gillen said, no, he didn't. He wanted an interpretation of the song. He turned to me again and said, "Will you interpret the meaning of this song?" So my reply was that the words are self-explanatory, and I said nothing further. He was sort of stuck for what to do next. So he starts to read the words - "Arise ye prisoners of starvation" - to the intense amusement of the entire audience who burst out laughing.

We were charged with vagrancy. The vagrancy law read something to the effect that the individual was found wandering from place to place without visible means of support. Both Ida and I had visible means of support. So, with proof of the fact that we were employed people, we were found not guilty of vagrancy.

Ken: Can I go back to the strike? I understand that the party headquarters then were all broken up. Can you tell me what the party did during that period; how the headquarters were broken up; how you functioned?

Lam: We had headquarters on Grove street at that time, right near the Civic Center. And the party office was broken into several times. In the period of the strike itself, the party organization was very much absorbed with this petition campaign to put us on the ballot. We were supposed to file those petitions by the first of May. This was a campaign which went on all through the Spring of 1934. And this was our major activity at that time although we were engaged in other organizational activities as well.

The agricultural strikes were still going on. There had been a national party convention in the Spring of 1934, and we had a large delegation to the national convention. Our general educational activities were going on as was the distribution of the Western Worker. So this was the kind of thing that we were doing for our own organization. It was our belief at the time, and I think there was proof of the fact, that the break in of the party headquarters was instigated partly by the shipowners in conjunction with the chamber of commerce and the American Legion using the remnants of the vigilante groups which had been used all the way through as provocateurs and in these break-ins.

Ken: Did the party then go underground?

Lam: No. Not at that period at any time was the party underground except to take steps to protect its membership lists. These things were never handled through the party office. That was a protective measure. But the organization was not underground. The clubs met publicly. People were invited to attend meetings. There was no effort to get out of sight, so to speak.

Ken: What about the party headquarters. How did they break them up? And did you stay there after they were broken up?

Lam: Yes. We just mended it all up again and stayed there.

Ken: What happened to the party during that period?

Lam: There was a period of growth in the party at that time which was certainly partly contributed to by the general organizational

Lam: upheaval in the labor movement, specifically by the fact that the International Longshoremen (it wasn't the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union at that time) Association - that the longshoremen had become organized and had won a significant victory in their strike. It is true that the other developments of that period, such as the unemployed movement, agricultural strikes and the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League activities and so on, also contributed to the growth of the party. 1934 saw a considerable growth.

Ken: This is another question. You went into the party as a technical worker. How did you develop into being more than a technical worker?

Lam: It was quite a natural development. In view of the fact that I was, as a technical worker, put in charge of the membership records, I became very much interested in the question of membership and the question of growth of the organization.

We did have an organization department which I was immediately drawn into, the head of which was Elmer Hanoff. By 1933 I became a regular member of that department, was elected to the State Committee of the Party as a member of the state executive committee.

I don't recall that there were any abrupt changes. It was sort of like growing into that field of work. Gradually I began to take on certain activities with regard to educational activities as well, starting first in the teaching of classes. I was particularly interested in the woman question so that, when International Women's Day came I was usually giving a speech at a forum or something like that each year, which I think was also natural because there was this tendency on my part towards a great interest in this question. But the party in general gave a lot of attention to it, at least in the propaganda sense and in the sense of agitation for women's equality and so on.

I can recall one very interesting Women's Day observation which took place where I was sent down to an open forum which we held every Sunday night down on Third Street, in the skid row area. It was a Sunday night, and we had a big

(road)

Lam: discussion about International Women's Day. Of course, the big example that one had was the Soviet Union where women had more or less won equality, even though it wasn't entirely true. If you really dug in you found out that the women were not yet on an equal footing in the Soviet Union. This speech was accepted with a considerable amount of enthusiasm. The audience was almost totally male because there were all the single male unemployed workers who were down on skid road. So, when the question period opened, the very first question was what had they done about prostitution in the Soviet Union. I remember being a little bit stuck. Number one because I didn't exactly know what they had done about prostitution in the Soviet Union; but secondly I was outraged by the nature of the question. It seemed to me it was a less important question. Yet it was not at all unimportant. It was an important question in the minds of these workers and should have been important in my own mind.

Ken: As long as we are on the woman question, what relationship did theory have to practice?

Lam: I think there was a lot of lip service. I think that is a good phrase to apply to what went on. Actually, as far as the women in the party were concerned, it depended a lot on the women themselves. If they moved forward aggressively or became active and projected themselves into the organizational work of the party, or into any of the fields of mass work, they were accepted and they were promoted. This was definitely true. But limitations were set by the broader problems in all of society and by the broader problems in the labor movement where women were not regarded in the same way as the men members of these unions. Or in general, where there were no specific efforts made to organize women workers. It came about more gradually and came about subsequently. But during those days I think much of what was said about the woman question and much of what was projected was agitational rather than substantive. It didn't result in any great moved forward or any great reforms forward for women.

Ken: My notes say - we are going back to your running for office. You ran in 1933, didn't you?

Lam: The first time I ran for office was in 1931. It was only a year after I had joined the party. At that time I was young in the party and young in years. I was selected because it turned out I was one of the few that could qualify for the ballot, having been born in the City, and having lived in the City for the required number of years. The supervisorial elections are non partisan. However, we entered as a Communist candidate and received 11,000 votes.

Then in 1932 we instigated the first campaign ever to place the communist party on the ballot. Some 14,800 signatures were required by the California Supreme Court, by law. Some 30,000 were collected. But the petition was rejected by the California Supreme Court. I do not remember why it was rejected. I do know it was rejected and we did not succeed in that campaign.

In 1933 I ran again for election; again as a candidate for the Board of Supervisors. In this election I got something over 5,000 votes. I think the difference can be explained in the fact that there was another Todd running. There was some confusion about that.

Ken: When you ran, did you run as a Communist Party member?

Lam: Yes, as a representative of the party and as a member. That was clearly understood.

Ken: What kind of a platform did you run on?

Lam: It conformed with the needs of that time. It was with regard to the needs of the unemployed; with regard to the need for jobs; with regard to the need for unemployment insurance. Equal rights for blacks and for women. Free Tom Mooney. And we injected the fact that we stood for socialism. This was not stated in a specific way. It was a general thing. Our speeches all said that we considered the ultimate solution of problems to be inherent in the possibility of achieving socialism. We also had a plank about the Scottsboro boys, which case was coming up again for hearing. Along these lines we also had a plank for the repeal of the criminal syndicalism law in California.

Ken: How did your campaign function?

Lam: We had a campaign committee very much like

Lam: any political campaign. It was made up mainly of communists. We were not able to broaden it or to involve non communist people. But our campaigning consisted chiefly of meetings in the neighborhoods, street corner meetings; distribution of leaflets from door to door, and a few things of that kind. I think we attempted some mailings, but it was very expensive, so we didn't go into that.

Ken: Did you ever get to speak to other organizations?

Lam: Yes. As a matter of fact in both campaigns I had considerable success in getting into that. I talked to many, many union locals all over the city. They usually opened their doors to all candidates. I took advantage of every possibility, both in the election of 1931 and 1933. Every invitation we responded to. If I couldn't go myself others went in my behalf. I had the very heartening experience the first time in 1931. I remember very distinctly going to some unions like the Cigar Makers Union, the Sausage Makers Union, the Bakery Union, where they knew my father, knew my grandfather. And members of these unions would come up to me to find out - was I the daughter of so-and-so, knowing it, I think, all the time. It was gratifying to know that I was recognized in that way.

Also I made a special pitch on the question of being a woman candidate. I was the only woman candidate in both elections. The union locals would give me the floor where every other candidate didn't get the floor.

It is interesting from another point of view. All these unions had their rituals where people sat around and they had a Sargeant of Arms. You had to go through the regular procedures of getting into the union, leaving the room when you were through. You never knew whether you were endorsed or not. I don't think I was endorsed, but I did get the floor almost wherever I asked for it.

Ken: Can you tell me how many votes you got?

Lam: The first time was 11,000. And the second time it was a little over 5,000. Also I should say that we had another candidate in 1933 by the name of Charles Hickey, who did get over 10,000 votes.

Ken: Were there any particular anecdotes you would like to tell about your running for office - any interesting experiences you had?

Lam: No. Nothing else.

Ken: Did anyone ask you any questions when you spoke?

Lam: No. Not really. I don't recall any specific questions.

Ken: You were talking about the communist party being on the ballot. Was that the state ballot?

Lam: Yes, on the state ballot. As I mentioned before, our first effort to get on the state ballot was defeated by the Supreme Court. So in 1934 we made a second effort to get on the ballot. Again it was a question of having a sufficient number of signatures to get on the ballot. 14,500 were needed. By May 6th we had 21,000 signatures. By May 21st we had 31,000 signatures, which was more than twice as many as we needed. We filed our petitions, and on June 4th we received a telegram which advised us that we had won a place on the California ballot for the first time in California history.

So, having won that, the party decided to enter the August primaries with a slate of candidates. This was done, and the candidates included Anita Whitney as the candidate for State Controller. The others were Pat Chambers for United States Senate, Sam Darcy for Governor, Pettis Perry for Lieutenant Governor, Archie Brown for State Treasurer, and Minnie Carson for the Fourth Congressional District.

The only figure of results that I know are the results for Anita Whitney who won 100,820 votes, which meant that we could remain on the ballot. We had to get 3% of the total vote in order to remain on the ballot, and 3% was 70,000. So we had a safe place on the ballot for the next election.

In September 20th, 1934, we held our first Communist Party convention in Sacramento, which was a legal convention held under the election laws of the State of California. There were efforts made to get us off the ballot even after we had qualified. But they failed.

Ken: What were the efforts. Who tried to get you off?

Lam: As I recall, there was some legal action taken somewhere, but I don't remember the details. Some kind of suit that was filed lost out.

Second side of tape

On August 16, 1934, the Grand Jury of San Francisco brought charges against me on the basis of what they considered to be false affidavits sworn to on the petitions to put the party on the ballot. I was charged with perjury. I was arrested in September, 1934, on these charges while I was in Los Angeles. I had been sent to Los Angeles on organizational work, and actually spent the next year in Los Angeles. That's why I was arrested in Los Angeles.

Ken: How did they arrest you?

Lambert: Of course the charges were from San Francisco, so I was arrested at party headquarters and placed in jail, and bail was set for me. The International Labor Defense in San Francisco, under Elaine Black's leadership, was responsible for raising the bail to get me out at that point.

Ken: What was your bail?

Lam: If I remember correctly, it was \$10,000. They did succeed in getting the bail. But, in the meantime it was not known they were going to bail me out, even under Elaine's pressure. The Department of Justice here in San Francisco was forced to send down not only a Deputy to arrest me, but also a matron so that there would be a woman present when the arrest took place - not the arrest, but the transference of the prisoner from Los Angeles to San Francisco. In the interim, while they were travelling South to pick me up, Elaine bailed me out. So, when they got there I was already gone, and I went to San Francisco on my own.

Ken: Was Anita Whitney arrested simultaneously?

Lam: Anita Whitney was arrested a little while later.

Ken: On the same charges?

Lam: Not the same charges. On similar charges. They changed hers from perjury (a felony) to swearing falsely (a misdemeanor).

Ken: What specifically was it that you were arrested for?

Lam: I was arrested for so-called perjury. Well, they had three witnesses. One of these people claimed that they had signed the petition when the

- Lam: petition was not in my hands; that I was not the one who asked them to sign the petition. The other witnesses, two of them, disqualified themselves virtually because they either said they didn't know what they were signing or they thought they were signing something entirely different. So it wasn't directed specifically toward the question of the signature on this particular petition. There was no corroborating witness at all. There was just this one witness on which the final trial was established.
- Ken: The law was what?
- Lam: According to the law on circulating petitions - the way petitions are handled is that the person who circulates the petition is the one in whose presence the signature is made. Everyone handles the petitions in pretty much the same way. They all go about distributing the petitions, and people go out and collect signatures. Then they swear to the affidavits that all signatures were done in their presence. They they are filed. We handled out petitions in exactly the same way as everyone else did. Therefore it was our feeling, first of all, that there was no corroborating witness; that there was just one witness whose testimony was pretty shakey. It was something of a put up job to try to trap us into this perjury thing.
- Ken: Let me recapitulate. It is common practice for a person who is a citizen, and who is allowed to get signatures, to sign petitions that other people have collected?
- Lam: You mean to swear to an affidavit that they were signed in their presence?
- Ken: Yes.
- Lam: It is common practice actually to handle the petitions exactly the way we did. In Anita's case they changed it from perjury to swearing falsely. Swearing falsely is a misdemeanor. Anita got a suspended sentence.
- Ken: Can you tell me a little bit about your trial?
- Lam: As far as my trial was concerned, maybe we can get back to that because I want to finish about one of the other things that took place.
- Ken: OK. Let's go back into some of the other things like the EPIC [End Poverty in California] movement that took place, and we can come to your trial later
- Lam: I can give you the date on Anita. She actually

Lam: surrendered. Do you mind if we go back to the Mooney trial?

Ken: No. Whatever you want to do. This is your tape.

Lam: The Mooney case is one of the big questions that concerned the left and the progressive movement in the early thirties, and it is important to realize that it had a great upsurge in the same period that the strikes and the unemployed movements had a big upsurge. By early 1928 practically every living person who was connected with the Mooney persecution had recommended Mooney's pardon. There was only one exception, and that was the District Attorney whose name was Charles Fickert.

There was new evidence. There were confessions of perjury by key witnesses. Jurors, and even the judge, reversed their positions on the case. Judge Griffin, who tried the case originally, in a public address in February of 1926, said, "The Mooney case is one of the dirtiest jobs ever put over, and I resent the fact that my court was used for such a contemptible piece of work."

So the Mooney campaign finally resulted in some changes. There was a very demonstrative action at the Olympic games in Los Angeles in 1932 when at the Los Angeles Exposition Park, which was packed with 100,000 spectators, four boys and two girls ran and jumped over the barricades and into the field of the olympic tracks with Free Tom Mooney signs on their backs and on their fronts, and ran the entire circle of the track without being interfered with. At the end they were arrested and charged with disturbing the peace. But this was a very dramatic action. Meyer Baylin was one of the people involved.

Later in 1932 there was a big meeting in the San Francisco Civic Auditorium attended by some 10,000 people.

In March of 1933 there were 15,000 demonstrators prior to a special court hearing on the Mooney case. And in May of 1933 proof of the frame up in the Mooney case forced a final

Lambert:

Lam: hearing. The Supreme Court had a hearing regarding this. He won a supreme court hearing on November 12th of 1934. This preceded what ultimately became a pardon because it all culminated in the 1938 elections for Governor when Governor Olsen [Culbert] was elected and finally pardoned Mooney and Billings [Tom Mooney and Warren K. Billings]. That's all on the Mooney case.

Ken: Not quite. How did the party participate and how did you participate in the free Mooney activities?

Lam: In addition to the fact that we always included the Mooney case in all of our platforms and our activities, we were extremely active in this whole series of events which I have described. The six young people who did this thing in the Olympics were members of the Young Communist League. The meeting in the civil auditorium was supported and aided by the communist party. We were part of a united front committee of a large number of organizations who organized that mass meeting. The same was true of the demonstrative actions. Any parades that were held, we were officially part of the united front established around the Mooney case. Of course as one of the officers of the organization I was very much involved, including representing the Party in a number of meetings of the coalition.

Ken: Did you ever speak on any of these occasions?

Lam: I spoke in behalf of the party at the organizing meetings pledging support. Usually that was what was done, pledging support and pledging how many people we would be responsible for coming into the mass meetings and mass demonstrations that were held. These were very broad and very encompassing movements to which many A.F. of L. locals sent delegates.

Ken: How many women were involved?

Lam: Well, women were a large portion of the demonstrative actions.

Ken: In the representative groups?

Lam: Very few.

Ken: Did the same thing happen then? Were you given precedence in speaking - this courtly, old fashioned approach of the AF of L leadership?

Lam: Not especially there. I didn't push too hard either. I wasn't always the one who represented the party. There were other people too.

Ken: What was the attitude of the A.F. of L. leadership towards you?

Lam: There were conversations with individuals. But they were pretty formal meetings and on committees and so on we always had sort of a secondary role in these broader coalition meetings. We did not play a leading role.

I'll tell you something about the EPIC movement. This whole period of the ferment of the early 30's finally led the people to turning to politics in many ways. I have already described how we succeeded in getting our party on the ballot. One of the bigger and more encompassing movements that developed was the End Poverty in California movement which was headed by Upton Sinclair who, in the end of 1933, agreed to become a candidate on the Democratic Party ticket for State Governor. He developed the EPIC plan which I would like to outline because I think it is an extremely interesting development.

The first plank was that self sustaining state and colonies should be opened up - colonies on state land, and the opening of idle factories to be operated on a production for use principle for the benefit of the unemployed. Sinclair proposed that this be financed by state issued script. Secondly, he called for the repeal of the state sales tax. He called for an exemption of small homes and ranches from taxation and for graduated taxes in incomes, corporations, unused lands and buildings, and for pensions for the aged. The Communist attitude toward the Sinclair candidacy was extremely critical. In editorials and leaflets it was said that "By voting for Upton Sinclair, workers who think they are moving to the left are really helping Sinclair pave the way to fascism."* I think that is a very apt quotation to show the sectarian attitude we had toward a movement of literally hundreds of thousands of Californians in a period when we were much involved and engaged in the struggles which I have described. We nevertheless had this very narrow attitude toward the Epic movement. We called it a "social fascist" movement. Inherent in this description is the idea that we regarded the EPIC movement as a paving of the way to fascism.

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The origin of this quote was a communist party leaflet issued during the election campaign. Louise Todd knows where the leaflet can be located, if verification is needed.

Lam: Following the elections there was another organization which developed in Southern California, known as the Utopian Society. This came up with ideas very similar to those of the EPIC plan, and was the successor of the EPIC plan, involving again hundreds of thousands of people, particularly in Southern California. Concomitant with that was the Townsend movement, the Townsend plan, which also, under the leadership of Townsend, came out mainly with aid to the aged. But it incorporated some of the other ideas, particularly the sales tax, the exemption of small homes and ranches from taxation, a graduated tax. It incorporated the same kind of planks in their platform. This too was a movement that involved literally hundreds of thousands of people.

By December of 1934 the communist party realized the great mistake that had been made with regard to the EPIC movement. The party then came out asking for united action with the EPIC movement, the Utopian Society and the Townsend plan people for many of the things which were still predominant in the minds of all the people, and their demands.

Ken: Did they succeed in getting a united front?

Lam: In some places, on a local basis, there was some success. There was even some success in getting people to join the party. But the best success was on local levels down below among the people in the neighborhoods.

Ken: May I ask a question? It seems to me that there were members of the communist party who were in the EPIC movement. If this was so, there is a contradiction.

Lam: Actually, it is so. But there were not very many. Some in Southern California. It is a contradiction in a sense, except their activity in the EPIC movement was considered like activity in any so-called mass organization. And one of the reasons they were there, or participated, was that they wanted to educate their fellow members in the EPIC movement in correct paths toward a changing situation. However many of the communists were brought into the EPIC movement by the sheer compulsion of the pressure of that movement which was very, very great, particularly in Southern California, in the localities and the neighborhoods.

Ken: Do you remember how many votes Olsen or Frank Merriam got during that period?

Lam: Yes. Merriam received 1,138,620 and Sinclair 879,557 votes. In some areas of Los Angeles there were charges that the votes were switched with the result that there was a charge that many of the votes that should have gone to Sinclair went to Merriam.

One of the consequences of the EPIC movement is that those thousands of voters who were on the Democratic party rolls in 1934 continued to function as Progressive Democrats in the Democratic Party, and this culminated in the upheaval in the elections of 1938 when Culbert Olsen was elected, actually changing the trend in California which had existed some 43 years. We had had republican governors all that time. Not an insignificant share of the responsibility for this must fall on the EPIC movement for having done the groundwork in arousing the people and the voters and the rank and file of the Democratic Party toward the issues involved.

Ken: The Socialist party?

Lambert: Another one of the very significant developments during the early thirties was the fact that in July of 1932 throughout the west there was an exodus of Socialist Party members who left the Socialist party of that time and joined the Communist party, in something of a demonstrative action, and a dramatic action. This was particularly true in California and in Washington. So that we had an influx of Socialists into our party.

This was finally culminated in a split within the state convention of the socialist party that was held in 1934 where there was an appeal made by the communist party for unity around a series of questions. The communist party delegation that went to the socialist party to be heard on this appeal was refused the floor. They had a proposal for united action on a five point program. As a result of the fact that they were refused time on the floor both the state secretary of the socialist party and a large number of the delegates (one third of the delegates) left the convention hall, walked out, and en masse joined the communist party. This was a significant action because it represented the second big influx of socialists into the communist party in a two decade period.

Lam: The first was, of course, in 1919, and this was the second.

Ken: Am I being cynical to ask if the communists were boring from within during this period?

Lam: Well, I think you could almost say that. Some of the socialists, particularly the state secretary, was convinced of the correctness of the communist party's program. He had witnessed and seen what was happening; could not move his socialist party organization in a similar direction. His activity could have been called "boring from within."

An interesting sidelight here is that this is the period when Oleta O'Connor Yates came into the communist party. She was one of the officials of the sociliast party at thst time. She came publicly along with Harold Ashe who was the state secretary. They took a public stand. She was one of the one-third delegation that walked out.

Ken: Now there is the criminal syndicalism act. Will you tell me what the law was?

Lam: Syndicalism was a movement of trade unionism, originating in France, in which all means of production and distribution would be brought under the control of federations of labor unions by the use of direct action. Criminal syndicalism in California was considered to be trade union tactics in which the direct action took on violent forms. This law, adopted in 1919, was initially directed primarily against the Industrial Workers of the World, as a result of the Los Angeles Times explosion in which the McNamara brothers were involved. In the five year period following its adoption over five hundred persons were arrested, several hundred of these sentenced to long prison terms in San Quentin prison.

Later, in the instance of the Imperial Valley, Sacramento and San Joaquin agricultural workers, the criminal syndicalism law was directed against the peaceful and non-violent organizational activities carried on by the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Union and its leaders. The violence exhibited in the San Joaquin Valley cotton strike in 1933, with the murder of a number of pickets, was perpetuated by the growers and their so-called "law enforcement" minions. The Criminal syndicalism law was definitely an anti-labor law used even when no so-called direction action was present, based on an interpretation that it was the "intent" of the unions to violate the criminal syndicalism law.

In 1932 an effort was made to get a repeal campaign under way, and one hundred twenty five

Lam: A.F. of L. locals participated in this campaign succeeding in obtaining some 50,000 signatures. 110,000 were needed. They didn't make the grade with it. But the 50,000 signatures were presented to Governor James Rolph, and this helped in getting the seven Imperial Valley prisoners released.

After the attempt in 1932 failed another attempt was made in 1933 with another petition campaign. In this some forty seven organizations gathered together. Again they did not succeed in getting it repealed. The criminal syndicalism law, to the best of my knowledge, was not actually repealed at any time. But, once the criminal syndicalism victims, the 1934-38 people, were released from prison (they won their case in a reversal by the United States Supreme Court, the act became inoperative.

The agricultural people who were arrested and tried under criminal syndicalism in 1934 were Caroline Decker, Nora Konklin, Pat Chambers, Albert Hogarty, and a group of other men whose names I don't remember. They went to trial at the end of 1934. They were given five year sentences and actually served something like two and a half years. As indicated, their cases were reversed and the whole thing wiped out.

End of tape

Tape One - 6.3.76

Ken: Going back a little bit, we discussed, after the last tape, this job you had in New York; and also in San Francisco where you were working for the Radio Corporation of America. Do you want to tell me a little bit about that job?

Lam: While I was in New York in 1929 I went to work for the Radio Corporation of America. I worked with the head of the export division. It was a very interesting job because I got an insight of the way in which the big corporations like RCA functioned in regard to foreign nations. They had much negotiation and much consultation with the State Department and sought markets for their radios and their broadcasting stations. They frequently got out new models of radio sets in those years (it was in the twenties). They would be stacked up with thousands of the old sets that were now no longer marketable in the United States. So they sought foreign markets, China for instance. It was an open door policy in China. Anybody could sell anything they wanted there. They literally dumped thousands of these radio receiving sets on China.

I can remember when I was there they sold a broadcasting station to Siam, and then followed it up by dumping all these older models. One of

One of the most interesting experiences was that during my time there the Soviet Union sent out a trade delegation to negotiate with RCA for a broadcasting station. It was my good fortune to be called in to take down in shorthand the results of the discussion. This resulted in the Soviet representative buying what was, up to that moment, the most powerful broadcasting station anywhere in the world for use in Moscow. But RCA ran into difficulty. They could not get the agreement of the Soviet representatives to buy any of the old radio sets. The Soviet Union were manufacturing their own radio sets. So this was a partial sale. Nevertheless RCA was delighted.

I think I worked for the RCA in New York about three months, and I came back to California. I had only been in California a couple of months when Mr. Collins called and told me he was transferred to San Francisco to handle the arm of the export division which did sales work with the countries bordering the Pacific and Asia, and asked me to come to work as his secretary. So in 1930 I went to work for him again, this time getting further insight into how the sales were

Lam: conducted. It was done partially through the State Department. The State Department representative would discuss it with the representative of the nations. Mr. Collins would write very extensive and elaborate technical sales letters in which he described the produce, the broadcasting stations and the receiving sets. These were sent usually to government representatives in the countries where they intended to make the sales. We had representatives in these countries, who were representatives of the RCA, to follow up the correspondence and all these negotiations. RCA maintained correspondence and communication, which was also done through the use of very elaborate cable grams which were usually put into morse code, which I had to learn. I worked at that job for about six months when I was urged to come and work for the party as secretary in the office. And I accepted that job at \$10.00 a week, which was considerably less than I was getting at RCA. That was my experience with RCA, which I considered very educational.

Ken: There was another thing we were going to discuss before going on to your trial - you mentioned your parents had been divorced.

Lam: Yes. My parents got divorced in 1934. Both my mother and father re-married. Not immediately, but in a year or two.

Ken: Why did your parents get divorced? Do you know?

Lam: Yes, I do. My parents were very duty bound people. My mother fell in love with a friend of the family when I was only six years old. I recall very vividly one night (we had our bedroom, my sister and I, right next to my parents') I was awakened by a loud argument that was going on between my parents. I got up and ran to their bedroom. My mother later told me that it was that incident that persuaded them not to get divorced at that time. In other words, she wanted to get a divorce. Then they realized that they had two children. My father had such a great sense of responsibility, particularly my father. My mother did too. But he was most strong about the children. So they agreed they would make a go of it. Despite that my mother and Bernhard Fischer, who was married at the time, could not eliminate or eradicate this feeling they had for each other. So, when I was about 16, 17 or 18 - somewhere in there - he made a trip around the world. After he got back he and his wife were divorced. However my parents decided (and my mother was very instrumental in this) not to divorce until my grandparents

Lam: had died. My grandmother was so fond of my father. So, in a selfless kind of way, they placed their own personal problems in the background until my grandparents died in 1928. I think this sort of gave them the opportunity. They didn't get divorced until 1934. Again I think the fact that he was in business and was winding it up and so on - she stuck it out with him until that was accomplished. Then she married Bernhard Fischer.

Ken: Did it affect you children in any way. Did you recognize this fact?

Lam: I was conscious of it. My sister was not. My parents were considered an ideal couple by all their friends. Nobody else was aware of it. As I grew up it receded into the background. But I had a considerable amount of sympathy for my mother, and I don't know just where this sprang from because I didn't understand exactly what was involved when I was younger. But both my parents were such good parents in an overall sense that I felt a great sense of security. When it came, it was a terrible shock to my sister who blamed Fischer, and in fact never talked to him the rest of her life. She had absolutely nothing to do with him. This was so venomous, her attitude toward him, that she didn't go into my mother's home for a period of eighteen years while her children (Rosalie's children) were growing up. My mother had to come to her home. My sister's sympathies were with my father who in no sense felt any acrimonious attitude. He remained friendly with my mother and with Fischer. It was a friendship. He married his head salesgirl in the bakery whose husband had been injured in an industrial accident which broke his spine, and it shortened his life considerably. After he died, my father remarried.

To Rosalie this was a terrible psychological blow. I don't think she ever got over it. She doesn't agree with divorce as a method of solving marital difficulties. She thinks no one should ever get divorced. I could see, when I grew up, as an adult, why my mother had this need for a new relationship, a different relationship, because Fischer was a lot more personally demonstrative. She needed the demonstrative aspects of a marriage relationship which my father was not able to give because he was immersed in his work. He had a great sense of duty, and responsibility.

Lam: I think that is a German characteristic though I may be wrong. A lot of German men are, of course very autocratic and very chauvinistic. But that was not true of my father. He was, on the contrary, almost selfless in his devotion to his family, primarily his children, but also to his wife. I think at first it was a great blow to him when she told him.

Ken: Did she have any relationship with Fischer, or was it purely a romantic thing?

Lam: She was very romantic. No. There was never any opportunity for that. They maintained this distinct attitude. They never got involved with each other. I discussed this with her later when I was in my middle years, and she was very frank. For instance, she told me once that she never would have had children with anyone except my father. When my father died in 1962 she went to his funeral. She was very moved. I think, in a sense, she still loved him in a way. But her love for Bernhard was a lot more romantic, and it sustained itself almost all their lives. Toward the end of their lives, when they got to be in their sixties and seventies, they developed a way of talking to each other that was almost acrimonious. Arguments - petty little arguments. I used to think this was terrible. Then I realized this was their way of communicating under the impact of old age and illness. He became diabetic. My mother had arthritis most severely. She suffered a great deal of pain, then developed a heart problem. So that was understandable.

Ken: My mother and Bernhard had a lot of little things they disagreed about, none of which were basic. But the way in which this was done was really kind of hilarious. He did not like garlic. He couldn't stand it. She liked it, liked to put it in her salad dressing and foods which she prepared.

He had another little idiosyncrasy, which developed also as he got older. He read somewhere that anointing your body with olive oil was good for you, was good for your skin, was nourishing, and so on. So this was his habit. He had built himself a sunbath - a place for sunbathing - and he would always anoint his body with the olive oil. He got up very early in the morning and would do his exercises. He was up hours before she was, and would go

Lam: through this procedure of the exercizes. Well, she got so upset about the olive oil. It carried over into his bed, and the sheets would get sort of stained with the olive oil. She was so furious about it after a great deal of argument, so she said she would fix him. So she got a whole lot of garlic and put it in his bottle of olive oil. The next morning he was anointed with the garlic. That was too much for him. But he didn't say anything. He went to the cabinet and got her garlic and took it down to the basement and put it in the furnace. The furnace wasn't going. She found it later when she went down there, took it upstairs again, and did it once more, which really brought about a huge explosion. It did not change anything. He continued to use the olive oil and she continued to use the garlic.

There was another funny thing she did. He was a painter. He was an interior decorator, a very specialized interior decorator who had learned his trade in Europe. He also painted. He did watercolors and oils. His favorite subjects were outdoor nature studies, still lifes, and female nudes. She he had painted some very striking nudes.

My mother had a roomer who had a room in the lower floor of the house. He was a divorced man. He was a man who worked very hard. I think he had two jobs, and he only came home to sleep in this apartment. He didn't do anything else there. He even had his meals out. My mother had the responsibility of cleaning that apartment. She would do that, and change his sheets. Bernhard went in there once and was struck by the fact that there was absolutely no decoration in the apartment at all. So he decided to bring in some of his paintings. He brought in several, and one of them was a nude, which he didn't say anything to my mother about. The next time she went down there, she takes the painting out without a word. Then, of course, he put it back. Well, the second time, she wasn't going to leave it that way, so she got some paints and painted a brassier on it. I don't know what Mr. Pierce thought. In any event Bernhard saw it and had to take it out. Mr. Pierce then asked, "What happened to my lady?" He never got it back.

Then she had something else that always amused me. She was the driver of the family.

Lam: He never learned to drive. They took a trip to Mexico and she did all the driving. He kept a diary. He was great in writing, and he was great in the description of the country. When he died she discovered this diary which included, in great detail, this trip to Mexico. She read this with great interest. He never mentioned her once in this whole diary. So she had a post mortum reaction. She sent the diaries to a friend in Europe because she didn't want them around any more. She was so hurt.

She had a funny sense of humor, and she was fun to be with when she wasn't in pain.

Ken: Did you see a lot of her then, after you had left home and came back to San Francisco?

Lam: My husband and I lived in one of her apartments for twenty five years. So we were neighbors.

Ken: Your first husband, or your second?

Lam: My second.

Ken: I guess that's all about that. We have just two brief paragraphs on the charges against you and your trial. We want to go into much more detail. Let's start at the beginning. How were you arrested; by whom, and we'll ask more questions as we go along.

Lam: The case started actually on August 16th, 1934, when the grand jury came out with charges of perjury against me, for falsely signing affidavits, petitions to put the party on the ballot.

I was notified of this, I believe, through the International Labor Defense in San Francisco, where Elaine Black was the leading person. But I wasn't arrested until September, 1934. I was then in Los Angeles. The word came down to the Los Angeles police department to arrest me, and I was arrested while I was at the party office in Los Angeles, which was on Spring Street. They arrested me and took me to the county jail.

Ken: Who arrested you?

Lam: The Los Angeles police.

Ken: How many of them?

Lam: There were two.

Ken: Tell me how it happened.

Lam:

I was sitting in the office when these two police officers walked in. We had sort of an open office. The doors opened to a long corridor, and we had the door open. They walked in and immediately asked me if I was Louise Todd. I said yes, and they handed me a warrant for my arrest which was made out by the San Francisco police department. I wasn't alone in the office. All my co-workers knew this was happening. So I was taken to the county jail. This was a new jail. I was up on the sixth or seventh floor, the place where women were kept. I was taken in and almost immediately was told to get undressed; that they were going to give me the examination they usually gave prostitutes - a vaginal examination for possible V.D. [venereal disease]. I don't know where I got the strength, because I only weighed one hundred thirty pounds, but I fought off those matrons. I kept screaming, "I will sue you. I will sue you. I am a political prisoner. I am not a prostitute. I will sue you if you go any further." You know I was just screaming, "I will sue you," and fighting them. My arms were all black and blue afterwards. But they didn't proceed. They said, "We'll see about that." I realized I was probably hitting a nerve. So, I was then put into a tank which had bunk beds three tiers high. It appeared to me to be an endless room filled with women. We were all in there together.

I was in there for several days and nights. We had our meals in a large mess hall. It was just a fantastic place. The meals were awful. We had stew, for instance, in which there were one or two pieces of meat, and one carrot floating around, and some very pasty white bread. That was the meal, with coffee that was sort of a sloppy thing.

Then, all of a sudden, I was bailed out. I understood that my bail had been \$17,000 and the bail was put up in San Francisco by the International Labor Defense. I was bailed out and immediately contacted the ILD and the party office in San Francisco. I was told to come back to San Francisco as quickly as I could.

Ken:

Let me interrupt a minute. Did any of the women in jail talk to you at all?

Lam:

Oh yes. They wanted to know immediately why I was there. They couldn't understand the charges at all. They thought they were ridiculous. I had a hard time explaining. I couldn't very well, except that I explained that I was a communist and that the motivations for my arrest were political.

Lam: Even that went over their heads. They were women who had been swept into jail. They were mostly prostitutes. There were lots of petty thieves. It was still a period where there was a lot of stealing going on because of the crisis. They were all short term. They were either waiting for trial or serving a short term sentence.

Ken: Well, you certainly couldn't make lasting friendships. What was their attitude?

Lam: They were very curious and very vocal about their own problems.

Ken: Then you went to San Francisco?

Lam: Yes, and we got sort of squared away. Once I got up there Elaine told me they had insisted upon (an undersheriff usually does the arrest) a matron going with the sheriff to Los Angeles to bring me up to San Francisco. They got the agreement of the matron. I think there were two undersheriffs and the matron who made the trip to Los Angeles to bring me up to San Francisco. They got there, and I was already bailed out, which Elaine told me with great pleasure.

My trial did not take place until February 6th. I went back to Los Angeles. I was the organizer there at that time.

The trial took place on February 6, 1936. It was a two-day trial. My attorney was George Andersen, and the prosecuting attorney's name was Gillen. I don't remember his first name. The judge was Judge Harris. They had three witnesses, two of whom were very vague about - they identified their signatures, but they were very vague about who had the petition in their hands when they signed it.

The charges against me charged that I was not holding the petition in my hand when these particular people signed the petition, which constituted a false affidavit because I swore to the fact that the petitions were in my hands at the time the signatures were made. Well, two of the witnesses were extremely vague about it. They recognized their signatures, but they were not too sure whether I was the one who had the petition. The third witness was even more confused. He recognized the first half of the signature as his, but not the second half. He said he thought he was signing a petition on Hetch Hetchy. And it was on the basis of this testimony, with no corroboration, that I was found guilty. I had a jury trial, and I was found guilty on three counts. One for

Lam: each of these witnesses. I was sentenced on the second day, of course, after the jury came back. The jury didn't take very long to make their decision. I don't think they were out for two hours.

Ken: What did the jury consist of, how many women, and so on?

Lam: That I don't remember. Sorry it didn't register. I don't remember what the jury consisted of. The selection of the jury didn't take too long. It took half a day.

So, on the second day I was sentenced to one to fourteen years on three counts to run concurrently. In other words, this was an indeterminate sentence. I went to prison not knowing how many years I would serve - anywhere from one to fourteen.

I recall that there was an atmosphere of amazement in the jury box because, I believe (and Mr. Anderson did too) that they had no concept of what was involved in this. They thought it was a technical matter, which it was. And, in general, the petitions were handled in the same way everybody else handled petitions.

Ken: Were there any other arrests for this?

Lam: There were other warrants - other indictments.

Ken: Against whom?

Lam: About six other people. The primary one was Anita Whitney. Also my husband at that time, and Helen Morris. I don't remember the other names.

Ken: Were there other people besides communists arrested?

Lam: No. They were all communists and they were all people in some leading position. My husband was then working with the ILD. Except for Anita Whitney, none of them were arrested.

Ken: Can you tell me a little bit about the trial. Were you questioned. What was the position Anderson took, and what was the position of the prosecuting attorney?

Lam: Anderson's defense was definitely based on the fact that these petitions were not handled in any different way than was usual. Secondly, there was no corroboration for any of the witnesses,

Lam: which is not considered the proper procedure in any trial. In fact the case became something of a precedent of permitting a trial to go ahead without seeking for corroboration.

Ken: Were you on the stand at all?

Lam: Yes.

Ken: How did the district attorney treat you?

Lam: Well, they were very sharp and they tried to break down the testimony. It was more in the manner than anything. There was no substance to the thing practically. I mean it was very difficult to consider that this was a crime, or that this could be perjury. It was such an amorphous thing. It was so technical and so far removed from anything that could be considered a crime at all.

Ken: Was communism brought up in the trial?

Lam: It never came up. George Anderson injected it in his summary to the jury, pointing up the political aspects of this.

The jury was taken by surprise. I think when they heard the sentence they couldn't believe it. This I got from George Anderson. I don't know whether he had an opportunity to talk to anybody, but it was very obvious that they were much taken aback.

There is a sidelight to this that came later. But I will put it in now. It shows just how far they were willing to go in those days with what was not specifically a frame-up, but which was taking a rule or a regulation and pushing it all out of context of what it really meant, what it really was, for political reasons.

When I was paroled, I was paroled out to George Anderson as a secretary. During the two years that I worked with George, one day he got a call from the district attorney's office. It turned out to be Mr. Gillen. He was talking on the phone. George gave me a signal to pick up the extension phone which was on my desk. I picked it up to hear Mr. Gillen explaining that in the Todd case "we had to carry out, we are like corporation lawyers for the city, like a lawyer is for a corporation, you have to do what the corporation wants you to do." He said, "Well, we were in that spot with the Todd case. City Hall wanted us to get a conviction." So, he said, "We went out and got a conviction." George wanted me to hear that. I thought that was

Lam: confirmation of our feeling during the trial itself.

Ken: When the trial was going on, did you expect you would lose it?

Lam: We anticipated that we might because of the general atmosphere that existed during the general strike, during 1934. At that time we had a red squad. I don't think I mentioned this. The red squad was part of the police department, and their job was concentrating on communists and labor people. That was their field of endeavor. It was the Red Squad that arrested Ida and me at that time. While we were in the car being taken to jail for that arrest, one of the red squad guys said, "Well, we still don't have a red flag flying over the city hall," implying that you wanted a revolution when the general strike took place, but you didn't get it.

This was the sort of the kind of atmosphere that there was. It was exaggerated. It was all out of proportion. It was a forerunner of the McCarthy period. And the whole atmosphere during the two day trial was similar. It was front page news in the newspapers with big pictures and so on. The headlines said "Communist convicted one to fourteen years." Anyone who took the trouble to read the story would find this a very difficult thing to understand. There was so much confusion that even party members didn't understand it. Furthermore they would get mixed up. Later on I was always asked was it the criminal syndicalism act I was arrested under. There was a confusion over the charge of perjury which I was constantly having to explain both to sympathizers, to friends, to family, to members of our organization.

After the trial, when I was in Los Angeles, I was asked to speak at a meeting which was called by an organization which had undertaken a boycott against meat because of the rising prices of meat. I was the party organizer there. There were a lot of party people who were in this fight. They asked me to speak at a meeting. And I remember this so clearly. I made a speech that had to do with the impact of the crisis and what people could do about it, and lending our support to this meat boycott. Under the question period I was asked about my trial and what it meant. I gave them the facts. I tried to

Lam: explain that it was a charge of perjury. But I realized, when I was talking, that it wasn't an adequate explanation. So I decided to give them a description of the political atmosphere in San Francisco as a result of the tremendous unemployment movement, and particularly the general strike, and the atmosphere that existed then of the vigilante action, the red squad action, the arrests, the murder of the two men on the waterfront, the vindictiveness of the city officialdom against the left radical movement, and that the arrest and trial in my instance was an effort to illegalize the party, to get it off the ballot - a reaction against our successes in getting on the ballot, and that the case was of a political character. That convinced them. I remember I had some comment on it. It was a lesson to me not to try to deal with this perjury charge and isolate it from the general political atmosphere in which it took place.

Ken: You didn't go to jail right away then? Were you still free on bail?

Lam: I was still free on bail.

Ken: How did the judge sentence you? Did he wait awhile, or did he have the sentence prepared?

Lam: No. He had it prepared more or less. He had to wait until the jury came through. Then it was immediate.

Ken: Was there an appeal?

Lam: Yes, it was appealed. And that was another reason we didn't go to jail until later in the year.

Ken: Who is we?

Lam: I.

Ken: Did you have to repost bail, or use the same bail?

Lam: No. They let the same bail stand. The appeal was lost. I guess it went to the Appellate Court and it was decided not to go any further with it because there was no point.

Ken: Why not?

Lam: We never could have won. George was convinced that it couldn't be won.

Ken: Still, you were buying time.

Lam: Well, that was the decision. I didn't have much to do with it.

Ken: It was a party decision, I see. How long were you free then?

Lam: I went to prison on November 15, 1935.

Ken: What did you do during the interim?

Lam: I went back to Los Angeles and functioned as the organizer there. The date of surrender (you have to surrender) was set for November 15, 1935. So I came back to San Francisco, I think, a week before that to be with my family and so on.

Ken: Did your husband go down to Los Angeles with you?

Lam: No. We were separated then.

Ken: Did you separate prior to that?

Lam: Yes. We separated in the spring of 1934. I guess it was about May or something like that.

Ken: I guess it's time now to find out, just before you went to jail, why you separated.

Lam: Our separation came, I think, as a sort of two-fold thing. We had been married about six years. And, as I told you last time, it was not really a successful marriage. It was not mutually satisfactory to us. It was fraught with tremendous pressures because of my participation in the movement, which became all encompassing. This was the big factor in my life, and personal considerations were sort of put in a secondary position. Fred did join. He joined the International Labor Defense and was active in its leadership. He did join the party too. But not until much later than I did. It must have been at the end of 1933 or early in 1934. By then we had really grown apart. Our separation was by mutual agreement. It was not unfriendly.

Ken: What did your parents think of this?

Kam: My parents were, at that time, involved in their own separation. It was the same year, although I think it was different months. But it was a time of upheaval, personally and politically. So we were separated, but we didn't get our divorce until I got out of prison.

Ken: We will get now to how you gave yourself up.

Lam: We came in and surrendered on the 15th of November.

Ken: How did you find out about this?

Lam: The attorney and the International Labor Defense.

Ken: Where did you surrender?

Lam: In San Francisco.

Ken: To whom?

Lam: To the Sheriff's department. They are the ones that transfer prisoners from place to place. I didn't have to go to jail. I was immediately turned over to the sheriff. The appointment was set. I was going to be taken to Tehachapi Women's prison, which is in the mountains southeast of Bakersfield. This required having an undersheriff (we drove there) and a matron with him. So we started out quite early in the morning and started to drive down the valley, through the San Joaquin Valley, to Bakersfield, and then out up into the mountains.

Ken: Did they handcuff you?

Lam: No. They did not. When we stopped for gasoline, or to go to the ladies room, she [the matron] went with me. Wherever I went, she was with me. In Fresno we stopped for lunch. We had no conversation the first part of the day. But in Fresno we stopped for lunch, and the undersheriff advised me to have a big substantial lunch. He suggested that I have steak, that I have a drink, that I have a dessert, you know, the whole thing, to have a huge meal. Because "this is the last good meal you will have," he said. That sort of surprised me. But after lunch we started a little conversation. Then he said he had personal greetings for me from Tom Mooney. Tom Mooney was spending time then in the San Francisco County jail. He was having a hearing on his appeal. So they had set up for Mooney a room in the county jail where he could see his lawyers and his visitors, and where he could do his preparation for his hearing.

It later came out (and Elaine told me this) that he occasionally was taken out for recreation, for visiting people, for dinner. This particular undersheriff was attached to Mooney as his responsibility. So the night before he came on this trip he told Mooney he was taking me down there. And Mooney sent his personal greetings, and told me to keep my chin up; that it wasn't so terrible; to keep busy in jail, and so on. Well, that was a real shot in the arm. I appreciated that very much.

Ken: Did the matron talk to you at all?

Lam: He did most of the talking. I think because he was really the responsible one. He also gave

Lam: me a little insight about the prison; that it wasn't the worse place in the state; that there were no bars on the windows; that it didn't have the atmosphere of a dungeon; or the usual kind of a prison. So I was somewhat prepared for what I was coming into, in one way.

Ken

I had already gone to see the criminal syndicalism people in the interim between February, the trial, and my surrender in November. I made the trip with Sam Darcy. We were coming up from Los Angeles and went through the Tehachapi mountains in order that we might stop and visit Nora Conklin and Caroline Decker, which we did, so I could see the kind of a layout that it was - the buildings and the sort of high plateau like valley. It was really like a valley. There were mountains behind it. It was on a flat area. There were four buildings, all two story buildings that sort of stood separate from each other. The whole place (I don't know how many acres were involved there) was surrounded by a high fence with the prison guards on each of the four corners so they could look over everything. It was a womens' prison. It was semi-desert like country, pretty high in altitude. I think it was something like 6000 feet in altitude. In winter there was snow. There was no vegetation except grass. I mean there was no forest or anything like that. It was arid looking. Not much view either.

Ken: What happened when you got there?

Lam: When I got there the first two days were spent in what was called the hospital which was on the second floor of the administration building. You come into the administration building, which had the administration offices in one wing and the visiting rooms in the other. On the second floor was the so-called hospital where they had some beds, and the doctor was there. All of the rooms, the board meeting rooms were there; and the rooms through which you had to go when you were admitted were there.

Ken: What was the process of admission?

Lam: First they took twenty-four sets of fingerprints, which are sent all over the country. Photographs are taken, front, each side. Papers were filled out, forms in which you told the facts about yourself, birth date, parents, and

Lam: yourself, birth date, parents, and the whole thing. And then you were taken in to be bathed. I would suspect that other prisoners were examined to see if they had any contraband anywhere on their bodies. This did not happen to me. But there was somebody sitting there while I took my bath. I soaped myself all over after that long trip.

I met the young doctor, a woman doctor who, it turned out later, was a classmate of Frances Foster (a doctor, and the wife of attorney George Anderson) in medical school. This came out much later. But I'll put it in now because I didn't really discover that until I got out of prison. Then Frances told it to me. But, during my imprisonment, the doctor was particularly solicitous toward my welfare. I was very anaemic, and every time the prison had liver she would get some raw liver, and she would call me over. And I would get a raw liver cocktail with a piece of lemon on it. At first I didn't know what it was and I was hesitant about taking it. She told me that it was liver and that it would be good for my anaemia. I knew liver was good for me. We had tried to get permission for me to get liver extract in prison through my doctor in Los Angeles. But they didn't give it to me. She did this on her own apparently. One of the most delightful things was the slice of lemon. We needed vitamin C so badly that it was just a godsend. The first time I ate the whole thing including the peeling and all. After I would try to smuggle the slice of lemon out so I could take it back to our place and use it in the tea that we had in the afternoon, and share it with the other women.

The doctor did other things, even little things like removing the wax from my ears. She didn't do that with the other prisoners. She didn't take the trouble. It was too much trouble to do that. She examined me every month to see how the progress was. When she examined me she would do everything - a complete examination. It turned out that Frances had asked her to do that.

Ken: How wonderful. What happened in the hospital. You said you were kept there for two days.

Lam: Yes. I was kept there for two days before being put into the building I was to be in. When that happened I had a great reception because there were my two comrades, but not only they - they had a little kit for me (I didn't have

Lam: a comb in the hospital). My hair wasn't combed from the time I left San Francisco.

Ken: So they didn't allow you anything?

Lam: Nothing at all. I was given uniforms. The uniforms were sort of a denim material, but a darker blue than denim, with a little white pinstripe in it. Each prisoner is given two of these. When one is in the laundry you have the other one to wear. So when I got over to the cottage, (they called the three buildings where the prisoners were cottages) there was a reception committee of Nora, Caroline and a group of the other prisoners who surrounded us all. And they gave me a little kit that had a hand comb in it, a hair comb, a little container. When I looked at it it looked like rouge, lip rouge. But it was a homemade substance which was used for either rouge or lipstick. You couldn't have lipstick in there. They made this out of coco butter and crayon that they mixed together - children's crayons which were non poisonous which they ordered through Montgomery Ward. And everyone shared what they got. So I was given these things which were both, of course, extremely valuable. I would have had to wait a whole month before I got my own comb because you could only order once a month.

It was a great reunion. I mean it was good for the morale. I was put in the same cottage with the two women who were already there. They were there under the criminal syndicalism act, and had been there already something like six months. They were put in that particular portion of the prison. It was a two story building.

On the first floor were all the black women and the Mexican women. They were segregated from the whole prison. On the top floor were the "incorrigibles". This was where they put the political prisoners. Now they did not regard this as a designation. They denied that they had political prisoners. Their whole approach was that these women, including myself, committed crimes against the people, real crimes. So they never acknowledged the fact that there was any difference between us and the rest of the people/.

End of tape.

LAMBERT - Third Interview - second tape - 6/3/76

Q. I wanted to find out who was on the second floor. You skipped from the first floor to the third floor.

A. The second floor was the incorrigibles. The first floor were the black women, and on the second floor of that building were the incorrigibles. This is where we were.

Q. And who were the other incorrigibles.

A. The incorrigibles were murderers, second time losers, narcotics pushers, shoplifters (not just ordinary shoplifters. There was one of the women who was a national figure in a ring of shoplifters), people who had committed atrocious crimes, and women who had beaten up matrons in prison, who were moved into that segment because they were considered uncontrollable. They were the worst element in the prison. And this is where they put the three political prisoners.

Q. Is this the time to ask you how you got along with them.

A. I think, before I go further, I should tell you what my number was.

Q. By all means.

A. I got the number 58298. That is the prison number by which you are identified, and everything else.

Q. You were the 59298th person to be admitted.

A. Yes.

Q. How old was the prison.

A. Well, I think that women's prison was not too old. They have ^{since} given it up ~~since~~ because of the location. It was not a very practical location. I think it had been there something like five years. I am not positive of that. The location was bad because there were these high desert winds blowing there, especially at night. It was a very noisy wind which contributed to many nervous disorders of the prisoners; and they had lots of problems, I mean psychological problems, some of which we witnessed. So, it was a young prison in a sense. That building we were in, which had just the blacks and the incorrigibles, was one of the three prison buildings. Then there was another one which had miscellaneous prisoners in it, and a third one which was called the honor cottage which had the people who were going to get out for good behavior, and all of that.

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Q. Let's get back to how you related to the women there.

A. Maybe I should tell you first, before we get into that, the kind of work we had to do, how we were housed, the hours, and the meals. Caroline Decker was a gardener. Nora Conklin was a cook, and I got a job as pot washer, then promoted to dishwasher, and then promoted to washing the dish towels. Carolyn's work took her all around the groups, but her main work was done around the administration building. She made a garden that was just simply beautiful. She built a pool and a fountain. She did all the work, the cement laying and everything. In addition to this, out in the grassy fields (she is not very tall, and the grass reached almost to her shoulders) she had a small vegetable garden for our use. She planted corn, tomatoes, carrots, onions and things like that.

Q. Did they know about it.

A. They must have known, but they ignored its existence. She used to bring the products in her little blazer. She would walk down that whole reservation (as it was called); and you would see her coming with this built up bosom with all these vegetables in there. But I will get to that a little bit later. I wanted to give you an idea. Nora was a very creative cook because the supplies were very limited. As a matter of fact, we had a number of struggles around that which I will get to also. We had individual cells which had in it a bed, a dresser, a toilet which was open, a mirror, and that was it. We had a little corner closet with no door on it where you hung your dresses. We were locked into these cells at 7 o'clock in the evening, and unlocked at 7 in the morning. The lights went out at 9 P.M. The meals were breakfast at 8, lunch at noon, and dinner at 5. You could go out of your cell all day long. You could go out doors. You could visit each other in your cells. You could be in this large living room area, which had a radio in it, and a piano, and davenports and chairs. That's about it. There was no organized recreation or no game playing. Anything you did on your own was allowed. We were not permitted to, or not supposed to, have any communication whatsoever with the black women on the floor below us. We did, however, which I will come to later too. There was a large bathing room which had individual little showers and tubs.

You could bathe whenever you wanted to, and use whichever form of bathing you wanted to. Once a month, if you had the money, you were permitted to spend \$5.00 a month on goodies like candy, cigarettes (not cigarettes, but you got Bull Durham), and papers to make cigarettes, and various small things like combs, toothbrushes, toothpaste. All these things you had to buy yourself.

Q. Were there limits on what types of things you could buy.

A. You could buy, for instance, crackers, cheese, cocoa, milk even (these small cans of milk), the Washington coffee. They didn't have instant coffee in those days, but they had powdered coffee. We got that because the coffee we got was really nothing. So, between the three of us, we would get one or two cans of this each month.

Q. What couldn't you buy.

A. You could not buy ready made cigarettes. You couldn't buy cosmetics. You could buy yarns and things if you wanted to do anything like that. There was a lot of embroidery going on in the place, and knitting, crocheting, and things of that nature. If you had friends on the outside and they sent you some of these things, they would go through the censorship. They had a censorship of everything, the letters and the books, and everything you got. The money you never saw. The money was kept in the administration and you had it to your credit. There was no way of earning money in the prison. Some of the women who had no money at all, who wanted smoking, would do services in exchange for cigarettes... in exchange for Bull Durham. The services consisted of doing your hair, for instance, or pressing your uniform. We would press our uniforms because they would come out so crumpled up, or pressing handkerchiefs, or pressing underwear, because we had to wash our own underwear. The underwear was also furnished by the prison - just a plain shirt and panties.

Q. No brassiers.

A. No brassiers. Some of the women made brassiers, and made them for you, in exchange for the tobacco.

Q. Were there sewing machines there.

A. No. This was all done by hand. I remember getting brassiers made. They were very meticulous with their measurements. They

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were made out of pongee. I remember that too. We were in a very favorable position as far as this goes. First of all there were people who sent money in our names, so that we always had our \$5.00 a month. As a matter of fact, when we left prison we each had some money left. We got tremendous amounts of mail. The International Labor Defense ~~Organized~~ this. This was a form of pressure. At my birthday I got something like 500 birthday greetings. This tied up the office because they had to register every one of these; they had to make a record of them, and they had to censor all this stuff. At Christmas time we were deluged with Christmas greetings - just deluged. We were permitted an unlimited number of letters. No matter what mail came in, we got it after it went through the censorship. However, as far as outgoing mail was concerned, we were each allowed one letter per day out, and it had to be no more than a page although it could be both sides of the page. We were presented with typewriters by the ILD. Each of us had a typewriter. Each of us was allowed one newspaper, but it had to be an out-of-State newspaper. You were not allowed papers from within the state. This was true for everybody. They didn't want people to get news about friends and associates or crimes committed or anything like that. So we decided on the New York Times, the Portland Oregonian, ^(because it was closest we could get to California) and the Christian Science Monitor. Between the three we had very adequate news coverage. As far as books were concerned, we got books all the time. We each had a considerable library by the time we got through there. We were not allowed any Communist literature even though we were not supposed to be political. We were not allowed any communist literature at all, which extended itself beyond the question of communist literature. It was a real genuine censorship. For example, I had a visit from Upton Sinclair in 1936. Remember this was only two years after the elections. And Upton Sinclair went to San Francisco to attend a writers conference.

Q. By what organization.

A. The Pen and Hammer club, which was an organization of radical writers. ~~and~~ All of them had been urged to visit the political prisoners on their way back to Los Angeles. Upton Sinclair came and somehow asked for me. He was very interested

in the conditions in there, and we had quite a long conversation. At the end of the visit he asked me whether we were allowed to have books, and I told him yes we were. He told me that he was going to send me a set of his books. When they came I was not permitted to have them. They were characterized as inflammatory material, which was the word used to describe the books. This caused Upton Sinclair to go into a big - well, he fought with them about this for some time. But it was of no avail. I didn't get the books. I did get one thing, which I will interject now, although it may fit ~~in~~ under another point. During the Christmas holidays (we went to prison on November 15th) ~~I think the communist international Seventh World Congress was in 1935. That Christmas,~~ at the end of 1935, we got hundreds and hundreds of christmas cards. In one of them was a small pamphlet which had the cover pulled off and there was ink all over the table of contents. And the card said, "I am sending you a little booklet. Forgive the appearance. The baby dropped the ink bottle." And because they had so many cards to record no one looked at this pamphlet to see what it was. As you might have guessed it was Dimitroff's report to the Seventh World Congress. ~~of the Communist, and the International.~~ *this* delighted us, first of all because we had heard about it. We had, none of us, had an opportunity to read it. ~~and~~ *and* it furnished the material for a lot of discussion over the months and for the whole year, and left us not totally unprepared for what we came into when we got out of prison. Well, the censorship as far as our correspondence was concerned was extremely severe. Several times they sent letters back to us. We were not allowed to send them out. We were not supposed to make any critical comments at all about the prison. We were not supposed to say anything about the conditions or how we were treated or anything, and we tried to stick to that. However, on a number of occasions, we began to conduct a campaign against some of the worse aspects of the food situation. For instance, they got cabbage, they got a lot of cabbage contributed to them and the recipe they made the cabbage with was to shred it and to fry it in grease. ~~and~~ *and* it was almost inedible, and cabbage is a very good food. So we began to write about the fact that they are ruining the cabbage. And finally we got some agreement.

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Nora, from her position as ^{the} a cook in our cottage - finally we got the concession of having cole slaw made with the cabbage, ^{and} steamed cabbage, and having it in other forms than this greasy fried recipe that they gave to us.

Another point was - we never ~~saw eggs~~, saw ~~a~~ fresh egg^s, and we wondered why they couldn't get eggs. This was, after all, not a direct criticism. Finally Easter came and we each got a fried egg^{for breakfast}, which we all considered a huge victory.

Now I want to tell you a little bit more about the uniforms. Like women everywhere we attempted to beautify and individualize uniforms, which were very unattractive. The only thing you could do with them was to get some kind of a belt which you could wear, or a collar, or something to set it off. So the idea of having collars, white collars, and they were usually crocheted collars, hand made. This was one of the easiest things. Or a scarf that would have some color, that was easy to do too. And belts. We ordered belts from Montgomery Ward with belt buckles so that we would have some little thing. We wore the buckle in the front or in the back. It depended upon what the individual felt like doing. But you did little things like that, plus having one's hair curled up and fixed up. You couldn't have permanent wave stuff, but you could have your hair set. You could have it somehow shaped and cut. We cut each other's. I didn't cut any hair, but there were ^{girls} women, ^{that} did cut your hair for tobacco.

Q. I know in some prisons they don't allow anything to come in that might be considered a weapon or a potential weapon. Yet you were allowed combs, etc. Why was this.

A. These were bought from Montgomery Ward and they had to pass the inspection at the administration, and they were not dangerous things. The combs, I mean. We couldn't get nail files, for example, or pocket knives. You couldn't get that. We had to depend on - well you get a little emery board, or something like this, or embroidery scissors for our nails. This was the kind of thing we exchanged. If somebody had anything like that, which they did, those who sewed. Their materials were all very carefully selected. ^{And} there were some people who were not allowed to have ~~it~~. For instance, there was a woman on

^{even these things}

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our floor who was epileptic. She had murdered her doctor.

Q. A little drastic wasn't it! I'm sorry.

A. She was an amazing woman. She was not allowed to have anything because of her epilepsy. ~~She would~~ ^{My job was to} sweep the floor.

Q. How many people were in your house?

A. Let me see. There were at least two dozen, possibly thirty. *or thereabouts.*

Q. And you all had separate cells.

A. We each had separate cells. Some women - there were a number of cells at the four corners that were double. They were big enough for two beds, and they were occupied by two prisoners. This can bring in another point. There were two prisoners who were usually a couple. There was lesbianism to a very great extent. ~~and~~ ^{It} was encouraged by the administration. There was nothing done to discourage this. It was apparently considered important for the morale of these women who were incorrigible, as that was the characteristic given to them. It was hard some times to consider, when we got to know them, why they should have been considered incorrigible, because they were not that bad. They weren't bad at all. But either it was in the nature of their crime, or in the nature of their behavior at some point in prison. Those who had beat up matrons were under surveillance constantly. The matron on our floor was obviously afraid of some of these women. She maintained a distance from everybody. ~~She did not.~~ She acted like a cop. But she maintained her reserve and a distance. It was obvious that she was terrified of some of the women. She was also very concerned when we began to do some things which involved us as a collective group. We had some battles over that which I will get to. But in any event, as far as lesbianism was concerned, it was tolerated, it was encouraged, and it existed with, at least openly, with the women who lived together in these corner rooms. ~~There were at least.~~ I am sure it existed in the other buildings, but we didn't have first hand information.

Q. I know you weren't supposed to be treated as political prisoners, but were you.

A. Actually we were. Yes. There were several demonstrations of it. For instance, at ~~one~~ ^{one} point the prison psychiatrist

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of San Quentin prison (you know this prison was under San Quentin) came down to Tehachapies for interviews with some of the prisoners, ostensibly, because he was doing this with many of them. This time he called me. I was one of those who was interviewed by him. ^{but it was} ~~and it~~ was preliminary to the parole board reviewing my case. The parole board had to set the time to be served. The first six to eight months I only knew I had one to fourteen years. I didn't know how long I would actually be there. This doctor (Schmidt was his name - Schmidt or Smith - I am not sure which it was) after he was there for these psychiatric interviews, ~~they~~ ^{they} were supposed to be, then my case came up before the parole board. The interview was completely on the political aspects. He wanted to know why I had become a communist - how and why. I answered it by saying I am supposedly not here because I am a communist. It was said in court and it was said here that I am supposed to have committed ~~certain~~ perjury. Therefore I don't see the validity of my being a communist. He said he was interested, and I said, "Well, I am not." "I don't want to discuss communism with anybody I don't hope to convince, and I don't hope to convince you of the correctness of my views." And I wouldn't answer any question that had to do with communism. I said, "I won't answer that," Well, he couldn't do anything there. He didn't attempt to discuss it any further. As a matter of fact our discussion didn't go much further than that.

At the same time he was down there he brought with him a film, a documentary film about the Soviet Union. We were not supposed to be political prisoners. He showed it only in our cottage, on our floor, and he spoke with it. It was a documentary. I don't know where he got it or ~~where~~ ^{what} the source of it was. It's main content and direction was - what do the women in the Soviet Union have. ~~and~~ ^{and} it showed pictures of the women paving streets and cleaning the streets and doing carpenter work and all kinds of ~~things~~ ^{hard physical work} like that. It looked as if it had been especially created for the purpose of showing it to women in the United States, ~~and maybe even women in prison.~~ ^{our fellow prisoners} I am not sure. It fell absolutely flat. ~~They~~ ^{they} knew that it was directed against us. The women came and told us that they understood what he was

doing. It was really a complete fiasco. That was one demonstration of the fact that we were regarded as political prisoners. ~~It came out.~~ As far as their handling of us on the floor by the matron and by the administration, they didn't treat us any worse than the others. It is just that ~~we~~ were in a situation where there was greater surveillance, where there was stricter discipline, where, for all of the atmosphere of it being like a country cottage, we had constantly the feeling that there was special handling of this floor of people. We were not permitted certain advantages that were permitted elsewhere.

At one time we made a fight on the question of Thanksgiving dinner which I can deal with a little bit later, and won it by the way.

I want to tell you a little more about some of the prisoners. As I mentioned, there were a number of people who had committed murders. The woman who had killed her doctor never defended herself at all when she was brought to trial. It seems that she was found in an unconscious state. Her epilepsy was such that she went completely unconscious for sometimes twenty four hours. This was still so. She was - she had a child. The doctor was found in a car, and she was wandering around. Obviously she had really done it. The question is - it was never answered - is what were they doing out there. She was given natural life. ~~She had a son.~~ She could never be paroled. And she had a son who was only twelve years old at the time of her trial. She educated that son from prison. By the time we got there he was a grown man, and was a professional of some kind. There was another woman, a little Jewish woman, who we found out very soon was a reader of the Freiheit (a Jewish Communist paper) and she got it there in prison. Naturally this aroused our curiosity and we found that she was serving a life sentence for having thrown acid into her husband's face when she discovered he was having an affair with some other woman. She blinded him, so she was there. There was another woman who had stolen a 15¢ knife in Woolworths. She was Jewish, and she got a five year sentence, and she landed up in this incorrigible group. We thought it was anti-semitism. She was from Los Angeles. She was a workingclass woman with absolutely no criminal record of any kind. One of the women who was a kingpin in the shoplifting ring of the country had been wanted in a few states, and was finally

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arrested in San Francisco when she was walking out of one of the big department stores with ~~the~~^a stolen fur coat. Then there were all these narcotics users, and so on. The women who ~~were~~^{had on} accused of ~~or had~~^{beat} up a matron were of middle age. One of them was a very husky woman who came from Arizona from the agricultural fields. She was an agricultural worker and she had been arrested because she had been accused of theft. I ~~suppose~~^{think} it was an automobile she had stolen. She had gotten a very long sentence, like ten years. She beat up a matron and she got another sentence on top of that. She was a very vigorous woman, and when she heard about Caroline Decker being a leader of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union, she became a real close friend and would do anything at all for Caroline. She felt a kind of alliance with her.

Our relationship with the black women was gradually established. We had to go out of the main door that left the building ~~xxxxxxx~~ all together. It was used by both the blacks and the whites from upstairs. 1936 was an election year. The Communist Party had, as their candidates, Earl ~~Browder~~ Browder and James Ford. They knew that James Ford was a black. ~~And so they~~^{and so} got their own kinds of newspapers from the South, ~~and so on~~. And they started in by clipping stories about Ford and about his tour in the South, and they would hand them to us in this entranceway as we passed each other because we were not allowed to talk to each other. Every now and then they would hand us something like this. ~~They would be clipping the papers and giving them to us~~. Finally we got so we said hello to some of them. Finally it got to the point where we established communication, particularly at their instigation when they asked for assistance in writing letters to the parole board, asking for an appearance before the parole board. They knew we had typewriters. They knew we had some legal experience, and a vast number of them were illiterate and could not really speak for themselves. And we got so we were writing letters for practically everybody in the place, We would type them up. We would formulate them, type them, give them to them. Of course they signed them and sent them on. It was known, I am sure, by the administration, but they never did anything to interfere with it. As a matter of fact they could read everything that was done and everything

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would past muster. There was nothing illegal about what we were doing except for the fact that they knew that this involved communication with those women. But nothing was done to stop this.

We had, on the whole, very good relationships with everybody on the floor. Once we had been there a little while we decided on finding some way in which we could sort of enhance the collective spirit that developed. One of the things we did was we decided to put on a play. We had to get permission for that. They gave us permission. We had some insipid play. I don't remember what it was. But they did give us permission to do it on our floor. So we had the play in which I played the role of a man, which sounds awfully funny. We had to have costumes. We had to have clothes and things like that. I was given the suit of one of the guards to wear in the course of the play. Caroline was the heroine in the play. We all had parts. It involved a whole lot of women on that floor. There were rehearsals. We had rehearsals between dinner time and 7 o'clock when we were locked in our cells. Finally the time came for the play to be given. It was a huge success. Everybody enjoyed it enormously as foolish as it was. So the administration, seeing the impact it had on the prisoners where we were, decided to let us tour it in the other buildings. So we were permitted to go with the whole play on certain nights, under strong supervision, I mean the whole administration was there. (The ^{Warden} ~~head~~ of the prison was a woman who was really a copy if there ever was one.) But we gave the play twice again in the two other cottages. The black women never saw it, unfortunately, despite the fact that we attempted to get permission to show it to them too. Then, when the Joe Lewis-Max Schmelling fight took place, we got permission to listen to that, (that meant staying up after 7 o'clock) in the living room, the large recreation area, plus the fact that they allowed us to invite the black women up. So we had a joint audience. The fact that Joe ^{fighting} ~~Louis~~ was a tremendous thing, particularly for the black women. We had a division of reaction to it among the white women. There were those who wanted the white man to win, and we made a great point about the fact that this white man was a fascist,

a nazi, and we got expressions of support to our view that they were glad it was Joe Louis who was an American.

Q. We haven't gotten yet to what kind of contact you had with the outside world as far as visitors were concerned. You only covered one visitor. What was the rule on visiting.

A. A person could visit us once a month.

Q. What happened when the visitor came. What was the set up.

A. The visitor would report to the gate and say who he was going to visit, and they would check it with the administration to see if we were entitled to a visit by that person.

My mother and my sister came down every month. My father came as often as he could, which wasn't that frequent because he was in business. Rudy used to come and see me once a month. If Rudy saw me that month he could not also see Nora or Caroline. He could only make one visit a month. You had an unlimited number of visitors. It didn't matter who came or when they came. As long as they were within the visiting hours you could have many visitors, but a specific person could only come once a month.

Q. How did you see your visitors.

A. There was a visiting room which had long tables. Right down the middle of the table was a barrier about two and a half feet tall so that you could look over it but you could not hand things to each other. You greeted your visitor. You were allowed to kiss your visitor and shake hands and so on. But that was watched. There was a matron sitting at each table. There were two of these long tables and there was a matron sitting at each one so there was a constant overview of what was going on during the interchange between prisoners and visitors.

The International Labor Defense of Southern California (since we were virtually in Southern California) took the responsibility of organizing visits to the prison with the result that not a Sunday passed that we didn't have visitors.

Q. You were allowed visitors only on Sunday.

A. No, but on Sunday we got them, and Saturdays, and sometimes we got them during the week. People who could come up during the week did, and we were allowed to see them. These visits were, of course, extremely stimulating. They added an awful lot to our morale. It would have been impossible if that hadn't

taken place. Although ^{with} our literature and our self-activities that we undertook, we never got bored. We never had problems, either morale or anything. ~~We had~~ We made the most of it. We had visitors of all kinds. As I indicated, we had Upton Sinclair. Anna Louise Strong came to see us. She visited Caroline Dekker. We had all kinds of Hollywood people, including Hollywood directors and writers. ~~A lot of people from Hollywood came.~~ People who came out from the East Coast, Communists, people who were on tour, would come up. And our own leadership came. For example John Leech (who later turned out to be a stool pigeon) the organizer in Los Angeles came. If people were going from Northern California to Southern California for a meeting they would visit. We had a great variety of visitors. Jack Warneck visited Caroline Dekker every month. Finally he worked it out so that he came down with my mother and sister. We always knew that they would be there at the same time. Several times my mother brought Nora Conklin's husband down too. Whatever the results of our conversations were ~~and the visits~~ we exchanged, we used to meet together, the three of us, for coffee and a little snack in the middle of the afternoon in one or another of our rooms. This is where we consumed the fruit and the corn which we just sort of put into boiling hot water, and the crackers and cheese and the chocolate and so on. These little gatherings got to be extremely important to us too, although we had a conflict between Nora and Caroline at one point which ended by my also breaking my relationship with Nora. Nora Conklin was anti-semitic, very strongly so. This came out one day in a very sharp exchange with Caroline of whom she was quite jealous, because Caroline was the more dramatic leader and more well known, and had many more friends. Nora resented being told, or any suggestions being made as to her handling of her job or her relationship with other people, and she was very critical of the fact that Caroline, particularly Caroline although she could have been critical of me too because I also was quite friendly with quite a number of the other prisoners, some of whom she, from a real bourgeois moral point of view, ~~she~~ criticized. For example, the lesbians she would have nothing to do with. So ~~when~~ this anti semetic outbreak ^{took place, was} which ⁱⁿ crudely so - I mean she called Caroline a "dirty Jew". Well, when that took place that meant the end of my relationship with her too. It was

intolerable. ~~And~~ I let her know that this was the end. ~~And~~ after that neither Caroline nor I had ~~any more discussions~~ or any more relationship with her. She became completely isolated as far as we were concerned. As far as Caroline and I were concerned, we continued our relationship, which was a very good one in prison.

Rudye's niece and nephew (we were then not married) presented me with a canary, and the administration permitted me to have it. They would let you have a bird. ~~And~~ ^{So} I had this little canary who became really the prize of the whole place. I would let him out of the cage and he would go back into the cage voluntarily. We never had a problem of losing him. When I went over to Caroline's cell I always used to take this canary with me because he would be stimulated by our conversation and sing his head off. It was fun to have him and I was able to take him home with me.

We had several other little incidents that are important because they showed what you are able to do. Nora baked the bread for us and, as I said, cooked everything for the thirty people. One day she came, early in the morning. I must first tell you how we had our meals. The dining room had tables which seated six people, four at the side and one at each end, and so they had that many tables for thirty prisoners. The matron, who was there all the time, had her own tiny table big enough for one person at the head of the room. While you were having a meal you were not allowed to have any conversation at all. There was a pall of silence. One morning Nora came dashing down the hallway and said that she had been given some pork sausage that was green with mildew - spoiled pork sausage. She had refused to cook it. The matron said she had to cook it, and the spoilage would disappear in the course of the cooking. Nora said it was so putrid that no one should eat it. She didn't know what to do about it. Should she walk out of the kitchen and refuse to cook it. Well, we thought real fast and we said "no, don't refuse. Go back and cook it. We will organize a refusal to eat it." ~~And~~ Caroline and I dashed up and down the whole place and we had 100% participation in this little act. No one touched the pork sausage. You could smell that it was spoiled. No one touched it. We had toast, and we got a little square of butter

only at breakfast time. It was awfully important to everybody. So we had toast and butter and coffee (our so-called coffee) and that was it. We sometimes got for breakfast salt pork, corn bread and a floured gravy over the whole thing. That combination we would sometimes get at noon and at dinner too. They had that so frequently. It was a disgusting combination. But this little pork sausage event showed them that there were ways of doing things. They never knew that we talked about it, or anything. There were ways of doing things that they could not control. You can't be forced to eat something you don't want to eat.

Then we had another incident, and that was at Thanksgiving time. ~~At Thanksgiving we felt that they were having turkeys. They had turkeys contributed to them. And we were having a turkey~~ dinner, and it was something very special. So we got together. We got some of the women who were closer to us and with whom we exchanged our newspapers. (Our newspapers went all around the place.) We decided to ask the administration for permission to change the dinner arrangement to make a big U formation of the dinner; to use sheets to make tablecloths, to decorate the tables, and to permit talking for that one meal. We asked the matron first, and she refused. Then we decided to send a delegation to the administration, and they would not see us. So finally we sent a petition. Everybody signed it. And we got permission and had a great celebration. You know it was just - the whole thing exploded and everybody talked, and everybody got in and made decorations out of anything ^{they} you could. Caroline brought in some of her flowers from the gardens around the administration building. It was a great success. This too showed them that there were things we could do without agitating for Communism or agitating on any political basis. These were things which added to the morale of the prisoners. The prisoners themselves were highly elated. For us, it was a form of activity that kept us going too.

Q. Tell me, from the minute you ~~woke~~^{woke} up until the minute you ~~went~~ to sleep, what prison life was like...a day in your life in prison, say.

A. We were awakened at 7 o'clock. We were already awake. We ~~went~~ to sleep at 9, and it was a long night. The lights went

out at 9. From 7 to 9 we used to read. We had our own washbasins and our own toilets, which had no tops on them by the way. We had breakfast at 8. Mostly I took my showers in the morning. It was a rush, you had to get dressed, get the shower, you know, go in to breakfast. My job was to wash pots, wash dishes, or wash the dish towels. The biggest part of the time I was washing dish towels. It was nothing at all. This was an easy, easy job. As soon as the meal was over, if it was the dishes we were washing, you just went in and you had this little room where you did it. That was very fast. I washed dishes three times a day, and at the most it took half an hour.

Q. You and how many other women.

A. One other woman. There was one woman who took the stuff off the tables. Then I washed and the other one dried. They had big deep tubs we washed them in. ^{The dishes were} ~~And this was~~ this heavy, chunky dinnerware, and you could throw them. I used to wash the cups and throw them into the rinse water. We used sal soda to wash them in. That took me only half an hour - three times a day half an hour. Then my time was my own completely. I had no other work responsibilities. Then I used to use the mornings to take a walk. I walked around the building to get exercise. I mean this was important. And, if there were time, I would take care of my correspondence. I was allowed one letter a day and I used to try to get that done before noon. Reading the morning paper. We got the mail sometime during the morning, so that I was already reading the paper. In the afternoon, after lunch, Caroline did a little work in her garden, but usually ended around 2 - 2:30 or 3 o'clock is when we would get together for our afternoon conversations and activities. Dinner was at 5 o'clock, so we had usually spent about 2 hours together. Maybe even three hours we would spend together. After dinner there was very little time because dinner was at 5. We would go into our own cells at 7 o'clock.

Q. You were talking about reading material.

A. Yes - I was going to say at the end of the day, from 7 to 9 we were in our cells with the lights on. I never was without reading material. ~~We had so many~~ They sent us a lot of novels. We got all the current material that came out in a general sense. We some some really terrific things. For example, I got the Tale of Ghenji. That was sent to me by a dentist from Los

Angeles. I just loved that book. ^{and we} got one book that had a paper cover ^{about} on it that was not the book itself. That was Frederic Engle's Origin of the Family. But they never opened it. So we had that, and the Seventh World Congress thing. ~~I had a book on~~ Some of the books that came to me came accidentally ^{were especially interesting}. I had a book on genetics and another book on biology. These are subjects that I have had a continuing interest in. So I had those books. I don't recall any of the others specifically. We had Vincent Sheehan's book. We also had Man's Fate by Malreaux. I can't remember others. As I said there was never any problem of boredom at all. The reading was very heavy. Each cell had, on the door, a little opening about a foot long and an inch and a half wide, so the matron could look in to see what you were doing. We were aware of the fact that at least once or twice in a two hour period she would come by to see what was going on. Nothing ever happened as a result of that. But it was there so you knew that you could be under observation. Not that it mattered. But ~~there~~ it was. I had the canary of course who slept on the outside of his cage. I think that pretty much covers the day. There were changes. We had visitors. We would go to the doctor. I was involved in helping pluck the turkeys. I was plucking turkeys for almost two days. Of course Caroline had this marvelous job out there in the outdoors, and she did a beautiful job with that garden. But we tried to be as active as possible.

Q. Let me ask this- I know Caroline was very young and very attractive. Did any of the lesbians approach her or any of you.

A. I never had any problem like that, and I'm pretty sure Nora didn't. But Caroline (I am not familiar with the details) there were approaches made to her, which she very gently put aside. But there were and I'm not sure what character they took. I should say at this point that there were women who engaged in ^{from sexual} lesbian activities in exchange for tobacco. It was a form of prostitution - a very low level prostitution. But there were several women who did that. I think that at least in one instance this was the kind of approach that was made to Caroline. ^{the woman} She wanted tobacco.

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Q. Did you share many of your things. Were you able to share much of the fruits of the garden.

A. No she didn't actually because it would have created problems. Actually the crops were not that big either. The cantalopes were very nice, but we might have had four. The tomatoes were great, the carrots, and things like that. But we consumed those ourselves. There was not enough to go around and you never knew but what some stool pigeon would make use of it.

Q. You didn't smoke, you said.

A. I didn't smoke, but I always bought the tobacco because I used my tobacco as a means of exchange. For example, if I wanted my hair cut; if I wanted it shampooed or set, there was one woman who used to do this, and I would give her tobacco for it. There was some sort of set price on it too - so many sacks of Bull Durham. Also it would fill in if Nora or Caroline ran out of tobacco. We tried to coordinate our buying. For example, the little cans of milk - we would get six of them, and it would last us a month.

Q. Was the stuff you bought for the \$5. a month all you were allowed to get. Could anybody bring you food.

A. They could send us things in the mail, but it had to be written material like books. But no food, no clothing, nothing like that.

Q. I think we ought to knock it off now.

Q. Louise. I read the transcript up to this point, and there are some questions I want to ask you about things we didn't cover about the prison. You said there were men guards. Did you ever see any of them. What did the women think about them. Did they talk about them.

A. Well, the men guards were stationed in small little cubicles on the corners of the reservation, as it was called, sort of high above the fences. We only saw them from a distance. We didn't see them close up except when one left the prison, there were several guards at the entrance to the prison grounds. We never did see them. The closest, of course, that we got to them was the incident I already described where the suit of one of the guards was used in the play. As far as the administration was concerned, there was a prison director (Warden) an elderly woman who had been in prison administration for practically all of her life. We always thought of her as a typical cop. She was an Irish-American, a very hard boiled woman, and totally unapproachable. She had an assistant who was generally the one who had any negotiations with the prisoners. She asserted her authority in trying to prevent too many visitors, and watching like a hawk over the schedule of visitors, so that if anyone came twice in one month they certainly were not allowed to see you. And she was in charge of the censorship over the mail ingoing and outgoing, things of that sort.

Qx She was the administrator's (Warden's) assistant. I have forgotten their names. I don't know if this is some kind of commentary. Our floor had one matron who was virtually a prisoner. She had 24 hour duty. She had her room in the same place. When she had her day off, another matron came to stay for that 24 hour period. She had one day off a week. And, of course, Tehachapai prison was way up in the mountains there. It was very difficult for these matrons to have any sort of social or recreational life outside of the prison. The nearest city was Bakersfield which is not exactly a haven of pleasure for people like this. I don't know about the matrons in the other buildings but ours had a special problem in view of the fact that she was in charge of the incorrigible group which included women who had committed some of the more serious crimes.

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But also women who had, at one point or another, been involved in altercations with the matrons and in one or two instances had beaten up the matron very severely. We could sense that the matron on our floor held everyone at arms length. She was fearful. She had very little conversation. She asserted her authority in minor little petty ways - infractions of rules and so on.

Q. Why did they beat her up. Were you there when it happened?

A. No. These altercations between the matrons and these women took place some time previously and they may have been in other cottages or floors of the prison but ^{they} were put into the incorrigible area once they had committed these crimes. They were considered a menace.

Q. Why did they beat matrons up.

A. It usually grew out of some difference of opinion about the rules or behavior by the prisoner. The matrons were trained in criminology. They were cops. They were police officers, and this was their lifetime career, this work. I don't know what kind of pay they got, or what kind of pensions or anything like that. But they were women whose life career was in the prison department. The one we had, as I remember her, was a rather grim faced and distant woman. There was no desire to have any friendly relations with her. She was a forbidding personality. We had several occasions when we did have discussions with her, especially over the questions which I already described of the Thanksgiving dinner, of the putting on the play and things of this sort. She was at first very reticent to have anything to do with us. We had to go over her head to the administration, at least on the question of the Thanksgiving dinner. Our pressure finally did bring some results on other things too. However she herself would not take the position that she wanted to go along with us on the question of the Thanksgiving dinner. It only came as a result of continuing discussion in that direction with the main administration of the prison.

Q. Now we get to that. You mentioned the administration, but what did it actually consist of besides the Warden and her assistant.

A. ~~That was the main thing.~~ ^{THE WARDEN} She had a corps of matrons and guards who worked under ^{HER} ~~their~~ direction. The administration offices were in the main building as you entered the whole complex, and the visiting rooms were there. ~~And~~ ^When visitors were there there was always a matron present. Sometimes there was a man guard present.

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I don't know how large the administration was. We got to see and hear at least three or four different people who worked in the administration offices. The doctor's area and the hospital area were also in that building. Our main contact and our main evidence of the existence of the administration or its composition was through this assistant who was the spokesman for the administration in the main.

Q. There is one more question on the jail. I got an idea of the jail itself, but I don't know how you lived. What was your cell like. Did you have a window, what was the size of it, and so on.

A. I thought of that after our talk last week, that I had forgotten to say that, because that is interesting. Each prisoner except for a few (the corner cells were larger and there would be two prisoners in those) - in the main every prisoner had a cell of her own. It had a window which had no bars on it. These were windows that could be rolled open - you know these little roll handles, and you could roll them open - a single bed, a ^{chest of drawers} ~~dresser~~ with I think three or four drawers, a chair, a toilet with no top to it which had its main plumbing inside an enclosure - the toilet came out on one side and the washbasin came out on the other side. ^{There was a mirror about the washbasin.} We had ~~hot and cold water, and a mirror over the washbasin.~~ In the other corner, ^{was} a sort of wardrobe which had no door or ~~no curtain, or anything.~~ It was open. That ^{was where} ~~way~~ you could hang your extra uniform ~~or anything like that,~~ your bathrobe and so on. That was the furnishing. The door, ^{to the cell} ~~itself~~ had a sort of long opening about a foot long and about an inch and a half wide which could be used by the matron to look in to see what you were doing or how you were getting along. To the best of our knowledge she would go up and down the corridor and look into the cells at least once or twice in the evening. We were locked into our cells at 7. The lights went out at 9. In that period between 7 and 9 we were aware of the fact that she went up and down the corridors several times. She may have ~~been~~ ^{this} ~~done~~ also during the night. We didn't know. I think it's logical that they would have some patrolling up and down the corridors during the night too. I had the canary. I had the cage on top of the dresser.

Lambert

I had lots of books, and they were on the floor because they didn't fit anywhere else. I had a typewriter. In fact, Caroline and Nora also had typewriters. The only thing we could do was to use the chair or our laps to hold the typewriter, or use the bed and sit on a chair. We built up a structure so you could get the typewriter up higher with the books.

Every morning we had to clean the cells ourselves. This meant mopping up and cleaning up the plumbing and so on. This was inspected every morning. If you kept it up every day it wasn't a problem.

All day the cells were unlocked, and the doors were open. You could go into anybody's cell, and you could walk up and down the corridor. And, of course, go outdoors for a walk around the building.

There was a big living room where they had davenports and chairs and a piano which nobody played. They had a large radio. This could be used anytime of the day. It was sometimes used by people for short periods. And the living room was sometimes used for card games.

Most of the time the women gathered in each other's cells if there was any combination of friendships going on.

We, of course, had our little get togethers every afternoon - our coffee klatches - discussions and letters which we shared with each other, and our newspapers. We really kept going on reading and talking and discussing. We had lots of things to do, so we didn't get bored.

Ken: Why did they leave the tops off the toilets?

Lam: I never could understand that. They protruded out of the wall. I don't know whether it was just for purposes of simplicity, or a guarantee against any loose things that might be broken off or used in any way. It was hard to figure out. It might have been a means of economizing on the whole structure because there was lots of evidence that the prison was very badly constructed, and the contractors usually cream off a lot.

For instance, we were on the second floor of this building and the living room protruded out from the front of the building. The structure was made like that - an extension out into the front so that it had its own ceiling and roof. If you stood there and looked up, you could see a crack

and see the sky. If it rained heavily there was water in the living room. It actually leaked. The prison, at this time, was a fairly new structure. So this thing about the toilets may have had something to do with economy measures, or that they tried to eliminate anything extraneous. At first this was a very disturbing thing to me to see that open toilet there all the time. I don't know how I got it, but I got a carton which I used to cover it up during the day. It made a kind of a seat out of it. I think several of the women did that. It annoyed me to have this right in the middle of the room.

Q. Where did you keep your food.

A. We had this ~~little cabinet like~~ a closet, *where we hung our clothes.* It had a shelf on the top, so we kept things on the shelf.

Q. Did you have any problem with rats or cockroaches.

A. No. Nothing like that because the food we had - we had the canned milk, ~~we had~~ the instant coffee, ~~and we had~~ crackers and cheese and things like that. When we got them they were pretty well wrapped, and we never took things out of their wrappings. They were mostly things that didn't spoil. Besides we consumed them so fast they didn't last very long. We got them once a month. The crackers and cheese went within a week. The canned milk (we got little cans of milk like the Carnation canned milk) lasted quite a while because we would use that in the dining room. We would take it with us where we used it in our coffee.

Q. What were your \$5. purchases every month.

A. There were certain things that came first. One of them was the tobacco. That came first all the time whether you smoked or not. ~~And~~ the other thing was these food items. We could also get candy. We didn't go in for candy very much, but we did get some, chocolate bars and things like that which ~~also were the matter of~~ *was always* a little treat. The \$5. didn't last very far. We could buy things like hair combs, toothbrushes, toothpaste, vaseline, cocoa butter. These things were used in making cosmetics. ~~These kind of things you could get - or Handkerchiefs~~ *too* - little things of that nature. They were gotten directly from Montgomery Ward. Our orders were sent in by the prison. They would get the orders from each woman and they would collate them. This

was a job that the administration did too.

Q. How did you get your shoes. Did you have stockings.

A. Yes, we had stockings.

Q. How did you keep them up.

A. I don't remember that. We had stockings and some of our underwear that we came in with we were allowed to keep, but not all of it. We got shirts and underpants. But I think, if I remember correctly, I had a garter belt. ~~And~~ The stockings were something we had to order too, now that you mention it. Shoes were shoes that we came with. When we left, my family had to get a pair of shoes for me which I was not permitted to have in the prison, but which ~~was~~ ^{was} given to me when I got ready to leave.

The prison ^{~~made a dress for~~} ~~dresses~~ you when you ^{~~left~~} ^{~~leave~~}. They make a dress ^{~~for you~~} which is made to order out of ^{~~a plain, dark~~} material - ~~you could get~~ dark brown or dark blue. It had to be a very simple dress - just a dress without any extra trimmings and so on, So my family brought shoes, and I think they brought a slip too.

Q. Did you wear one pair of shoes the whole time you were there.

A. Yes. I was there a year and a half.

Q. Could you have gotten shoes.

A. It is possible. I did get slippers for instance. Slippers and a bathrobe were sent to me at Christmas time. There were certain things - we got a list of things we were allowed to get at Christmas and those were some of the things we were allowed, and we did get them.

Q. I want to ask one more question about this time..did anyone ever try to escape while you were there.

A. No. Not while I was there, and I don't think at any time when the other women were there either.

Last time I told you something about the mail, and the tremendous amount of mail that we got from people all over the state and all over the country for that matter. At one point we got letters that turned out to be quite amusing to us. When Charlie Chaplain's film, Modern Times, came out everybody, I guess, saw it, and for weeks every letter we got, and we got literally dozens and dozens of letters, gave us a detailed description of Modern Times. We knew the picture thoroughly without having seen it. We knew practically everything that took place in it.

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We got a great kick out of this. We would finally bet with each other ~~whether the letters~~ ^{the next letter} whether there would be another letter describing Modern Times.. The other thing that we got a long description of in many many letters was the launching of the Sunday Workers. When the Daily Worker went over to including a Sunday edition it had a somewhat broader appeal and a separate and new editorial staff. The first issue came out on January 12th, 1936. There again for weeks we got descriptions of the Sunday Worker, what it had in it and so on. This was interesting to me later, and especially when I read Al Richmond's Long View From the Left. He was one of the editors of that Sunday Worker and gives a long description of his experiences with the paper.

Q. You mentioned before that your morale was good, you were busy. But, at the beginning of the interview, you mentioned the prison was on a plateau and there was a wind and this affected the health of some of the inmates. Did it bother you at all.

A. I think the wind does bother everybody. It came especially at night. It was a dreadful sounding thing - a big rush of sound. I think that much of the reaction to it comes from the terrible boredom that exists in the prison for the majority of the prisoners. It was an abnormal situation and despite the fact that they were applying here a certain relaxation of prison life it nevertheless was a very devastating experience for many of the women there. I think this was true of the women on the floor we were on. It was true of the women below us, the black women who were segregated in the floor below us, there was nothing for them to do outside of these small jobs they had that were done in a short time. There was not enough to do and not enough rehabilitative activity if you can call it that. One is hard put to figure out what can be done because the whole system is so archaic in a way. We became aware of the fact that the wind had an effect on people because there were frequent outbreaks of hysterical behavior, of hysteria on the part of women, of crying. They had to be taken off to the hospital. Whatever they did to them there we don't know. ~~There was quite a bit of -~~ The morale of most of the prisoners, I think, showed effects of some kind of another as a result of the wind or the fact that they are in prison, or the fact that there were put together in this incofrigible group such diversified types of people who could not -

you had a feeling there were very few meaningful relationships outside of the homosexual ones which were very obvious and who kept off to themselves pretty much - there were no meaningful relationships which developed in the friendships there. There was a lot of backbiting and a lot of competition for little favors and things of this sort. We didn't feel this. We were sort of fortified to a large extent by our own activities, and our own life interests and our interests in the world, the outside world, and our relationship with the people who came to visit. We were never without visitors. We were never without mail, and all of the supportive things that the movement could do. And because we were in essence political prisoners I think we had a great protection against some of the corroding effects of imprisonment which manifested itself in these different ways among the women. There was a lot of bad health, and there was a lot of neurosis, behavioral patterns which were obviously neurotic. When I first came in and discovered I was going to be in the area with the incorrigibles I was somewhat horrified. I had a preconceived idea of what criminals of this nature were like. Fortunately Caroline and Nora's stay there had shown them that these people were not as horrendous as they sounded. It was an injustice to put the political prisoners in that place. It was a very wrong thing. However our understanding of the factors that brought these people to that point and the crimes they committed, whether it was murder, or whether it was the acid throwing of this little lady with the profound jealousy she had, or the shoplifters, or the thieves, the dope pushers and so on - much of it arose out of their conditions of life and things of this sort which brought them to the point where they committed crimes of that nature. Once you got to know them they were human beings like everyone else and not impossible to associate with, not impossible to get along with, which we did extremely well. ~~And~~ Once they accepted the fact that we too were human (though they never quite understood what we were there for. They never understood criminal syndicalism, never understood why ~~we~~ *we were such* devoted, dedicated Communists giving our lives for something we didn't even get paid for very much[!]. This they could never understand. But they could see we had a certain amount of knowledge which was useful to everybody - how to handle our requests for

parole hearings, how to communicate with the outside world. They certainly sensed that we had great support from the outside world.

Q. That brings us to the next question I was going to ask which is = was there a campaign for your release on the outside.

A. Yes there was, and it manifested itself in many ways in not only that we got such heavy mail, but the parole board did too. Everyone was asked to send a letter to the parole board asking for an early parole hearing and for a short sentence and release from prison at the same time that they sent us letters. So we knew there was a great letter campaign going on.. In the entire period from the time I was incarcerated in December until I got before the parole board. Naturally this was part of the whole campaign of public meetings and demonstrative actions and the newspaper, and so on.

Q. I would like to know now what the parole board was and how you - what was the parole board.

A. The parole board is a board on parole and prison terms. Because we had this law in California for an indeterminate sentence (I had 1 to 14 years) someone has to determine how long you actually serve on that indeterminate sentence. The parole board had that responsibility. They also keep records and review the status of every prisoner in prison - his behavior - what he does - relationships and so on, and determine when they will review the case for possible parole. The parole board if I remember correctly (I am not quite certain of this) is an appointed body which is appointed by the Board of Prisons.

Q. Are they paid.

A. Yes. They are paid, and they have quite a big job when it comes to San Quentin. They have the entire prison set up under their control. I don't know how often they came down to Tehachapai. I don't remember that. But I do know that when my hearing came up I had been there about six months, ~~by the time the hearing on my case came up.~~

Something happens to the prisoners when they are scheduled for board hearings. The board will determine how long they have to serve. The board determines the date of their release and whether or not they get parole. Once they know they are going to have a hearing then a psychological thing begins to develop with the prisoners which is termed "Board Fever". We talk about so and so

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having board fever because they are anticipating what would happen at the board. Usually this would begin to manifest itself something like a month in advance of the hearing because you knew when it was going to be. Then you would have expressions of sympathy from other prisoners who would suffer the board fever with you, especially if they had any sympathy for your situation. You were given all kinds of advice by everybody. Everybody began to be concerned about your appearance, and you were encouraged to get some decorative thing on your uniform, like a collar or something, and to get your hair fixed up. The girls that were capable of doing the hair dos were ready to do your hair so you looked your absolute best when you walked into the board hearing. I got some special advice from one of the women who said to me, "When you get there remember one thing, that these guys look the same as you do when they are sitting on the can, and they are no different than you." And don't be intimidated by them. I thought that was amusing.

When the board hearing took place it evolved that they were using the interview that we had with the prison psychiatrist, Dr. Smith, as well as any records that the prison had with regard to our general behavior, with regard to our mail, with regard to our visitors. We had had some very impressive visitors. Anna Louise Strong was there and had come directly from Washington where she had lunch with Eleanor Roosevelt and boomed this fact out into the ^{it}vising room one day. A lot of the Hollywood people came up. ~~And we~~ had Upton Sinclair - people whose names were known. I think the board had a full picture of this, and all the records of our mail that went in and out, the quantity of it.

Q. Pardon me - were all three of you up for parole.

A. I was at that time. Not actually up for parole at that moment, but for having my sentence set, ^{regarding} how much of the one to fourteen years I would be required to serve. The others never got to the point of parole hearings because they were waiting for the Supreme Court decision. The board interview was not very long because they asked me why I had become a communist, ~~because~~ I had refused to answer this to Dr. Smith. So I made the same response - that I ~~wasn't here~~ ^{ostensibly} I wasn't there ⁿ because I was a communist. I was supposed to have committed a crime of perjury. I said at least this is the position that has been taken by the administration, it is the position that ~~has been~~ ^{was} taken by the court, and I said

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"I don't think the question of my being a communist comes into the picture at all, if you stick to your own evaluation of ~~it~~ ^{my impression}. They didn't pursue that question, but they asked me what was my intent when I got out, to go back to communist activity? I said yes, I would. I didn't feel ashamed of that. I don't consider it a crime, and I would. I think this was in essence all they asked about the question of communism. They asked me if I could get a job. I said yes I could. I had experience as a secretary, ~~as a secretarial worker. I was sure I could get a job.~~ I think the only other question they asked was in regard to my parents. Were they alive. Did I have relationships with them. The answers were yes, of course, That was it. It lasted a very short time. Within a few weeks I was advised that my term was set for three years, half the time to be served in prison and half of the time out on parole. I was advised that if one's behavior was such that you do not have an infraction of the rules, you got time off for good behavior. If I got time off for good behavior this would probably turn out to be around ~~28 months~~ 28 months. of service out of the three years. And that is actually what happened. I served ~~28~~ 28 months. Once I was ready for parole, after I had served the year and a half, ~~in~~ ^{one} I could be paroled only if I had a job before I left the prison, which they approved. ~~And~~ ^{And} this required another board hearing. I was not required to be present at ~~this~~ ^{the second hearing} which was held, I think, in the San Francisco Bay Area. ~~And~~ ^{The} International Labor Defense lined up a job for me. I was hired as George Anderson's secretary. George agreed that I come to work for him as his secretary. I was his first secretary. He had been doing all his own work before that. They also had to approve my living arrangements. They agreed to my living at home with my mother. So I had a job and I had a place to live. They approved of both of these. Then I got a Christmas parole which put me out of prison a few days before Christmas, the Christmas of 1936, with the result that I actually was in prison itself, I think, for thirteen months or fourteen months. ~~Then~~ ^{on parole} I served until March 15th, 1938. The sentence started November 15th, 1935 ~~and~~ ^{and} March 15, 1938. That was 28 months served, the balance off for good time. Once I got out on parole I had to report monthly to the sheriff.

Q. How many people were on the parole board.

A. Five, I think.

Q. How many men. How many women.

A. All men.

Q. Do you know anything about their background.

A/ No.

Q. How old were they.

A. Oh, they were all middle aged men.

Q. What did they look like. Did their looks indicate what they might have been.

A. I think most of them ~~are~~^{were} people with law experience. They are political jobs. They are appointed jobs. I can't say much more than that.

Q. Before we get into your life under parole, suppose you can give me any summation of what you think of the penal system.

A. As it was then, or as it is now.

Q. I think as it was then because that is your experience.

A. As I indicated earlier my experience with it was this was a prison that was supposed to be a model prison using the most modern methods of imprisonment, and they had loosened things up as I indicated. But it is an archaic system. It doesn't rehabilitate people. It is degrading. The whole thing seemed then already to be kind of a useless way of trying to cope with the criminal fringe in society, especially when you realize that most of these people could have gone in a different direction, if at certain points in their lives they had had different opportunities, education and all the other things. We had much discussion about the prison system and felt that it was generally somewhat -

Q. Well the whole matter of rehabilitation in prison came about generally after you got out. What is your opinion about rehabilitation versus a penal institution.

A. Well I think that is a step forward. The penal institution is based on punishment without any re education, without any hopefulness for the individual for the kind of life they will come out to. Many of them just came out and went back to the same thing they were doing before. I think the idea of rehabilitation is a good one if they can develop a real basic education program, recreation, and finding the individual talents of the people. In San Quention you have the astonishing development of people getting themselves a college education while they are in prison, becoming artists, becoming writers, and so on. One has the feeling from the outside that this is the result of the

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individual prisoners great determination to change his way of life and change his existence. It is not the prison system itself that encourages this. Nevertheless the fact that there are such examples is proof of the fact that given encouragement under a humane rehabilitation system that people change and become useful citizens in society.. I think that particularly with the black and minority prisoners so much of what has happened to them is the result of discrimination against their people and as a result of the oppression that they suffer that it is one of the facets of the American system that rehabilitation should include answers to these problems of overcoming the discrimination and the oppression in some way or another. I know this is a whole science in itself and I know that there are discussions taking place in circles of criminologists where even the rehabilitation systems which have been developed are up for very sharp criticism. I would say on the basis of our experience at Tehachapi that we ~~could~~ ^{came} away not very impressed with the results of the model prison for women at that time.

Q. I keep on getting more question as you talk. I am sorry but I have to ask this. Did you make any friendships while you were there that lasted after you left prison.

A. No, we did not. I had one incident which is sort of interesting. In prison there were several of the women, particrly those who were in for lesser crimes, we met one woman whose first name was Gladys. I don't remember the rest of her name, who had a five year sentence on narcotics.

Q. We were talking about Gladys.

A. Yes. She was in on a five year sentence for narcotics. She and her husband had both been arrested and he was serving a similar term at San Quentin. They had a daughter who one of the grandmothers was taking care of. ~~She~~ ^{Gladys} was sort of a simple woman and not a criminal type. At least it didn't appear to us while I was in prison. A couple of years after I got out (the party headquarters was then at 121 Haight Street) ..this was after I had finished serving my time on parole, and was working with the party again..one morning two women walked in all done up in fancy clothes and make up and so on, and one of them was Gladys. Obviously they were prostitutes. It just was obvious. I was very surprised to see her and wondered at the meaning of this visit. She introduced me to this other woman, but Gladys was extremely sober and extremely serious, almost grim, and revealed that she and this other woman had just been released from the city jail. They had been arrested the night before in a sweep in their neighborhood. ~~I~~ I don't know where it was. She was accused by other women, the group they were associating with, of being a stool pigeon, of having revealed their house of prostitution, their place, to the police, and it was raided. Gladys was very very upset by that accusation, and brought this friend to me to confirm the fact that she was not a stoolpigeon, and could not have been a stoolpigeon because she was not a stoolpigeon at Tehachapai. And I looked this woman straight in the eye and told her that Gladys was correct - she could not have been a stoolpigeon. It is not in her to be a stoolpigeon. If she had been one in Tehachapi everyone would have known it. We know that she wasn't. I said, "You will just have to take my word for it. She is not the type. She would never do anything like that." This was accepted, and Gladys was happy and thanked me and left. Some time later she came back to see me and she had a key to a Greyhound station locker in Sacramento which she wanted to give me because in that locker was something she wanted me to have. It was a fur coat, and all I had to do was to go Sacramento and pick it up, because she wanted me to have something as a remembrance of our friendship in Tehachapi and ^{for} what I had done

for her in clearing her name as being a stoolpigeon. I ~~said~~ ^{asked}, well, ~~did~~ - "were you accused of that any further," and she said no, never again. The story went around that she had not been a stool pigeon on high authority, and I thanked her, ~~and~~ ^{best} I never went to pick ~~it~~ ^{the coat} up ~~because~~ I was sure there was something wrong with it. It was obviously ~~some~~ hot goods, you know. ~~I never went to pick it up, and I never saw her again. And this is the only contact I ever had with any of the prisoners we met there.~~

Q. Do you still have the key.

A. No. I lost that.

Q. You mentioned health there. When you went in you were anæmic. Did your anemia continue.

A. It improved very much while I was there because of these liver cocktails I got from the doctor. But I think it improved generally because of the fact that the pressures were off. There is something about a person like myself of Caroline where you do not suffer the pressures that other people do. ~~We didn't~~ - I mean we had a certain morale about us. We were more objective and we had a great many interests, and so on. ~~And~~ ^{the} pressure of the daily work of the party movement, which was very heavy for us at all times, very extensive meetings and all of the activities, that was off.

Q. Did you weigh more when you came out.

A. No. I weighed less. I was very thin as a matter of fact.

Q. Did this affect your health in any way.

A. It didn't affect it basically. ~~no~~. I think, as a matter of fact, having had this sort of rest I came out feeling better.

Q. Were Caroline and Nora still in when you left.

A. Yes. I think they were in at least another year. They served altogether two and a half years in prison. They were in six months when I got there and I think they got out sometime while I was still on parole.

Q. You say you got out on Christmas parole. What was the date.

A. It was a few days before Christmas. I think it was about the 19th or the 20th.

Q. Can you tell me a little bit about the process of parole - how you go about it. Did you say goodbye to your friends, etc.

A. We had an emotional goodbye, when I left the floor and said goodbye to my fellow prisoners, particularly Caroline

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My family was there, my mother and father, even though they had been separated ~~and remarried~~, came - my sister was there and Rudy²⁰ was there. They picked me up sometime during the morning. I think it was 9 or 10 o'clock..

Q. Wait a minute. Tell me about your emotional goodbye. What happened.

A. Everybody came to say goodbye from the floor. Evey the matron said goodbye and wished me good luck. There wasn't anyone who didn't say goodbye.

Q. What about the materials in your cell.

A. That was distributed to others. I left the books with Caroline. ~~The only thing I took with me was the bird.~~ I was allowed to take the canary home with me. But ~~anything~~ ^{everything} else I left - all my things including the typewriter. I left it all with Caroline to be used in any way they wanted. I don't know what happened to these things in the end when Caroline came out.

Q. You didn't have any formal goodbye ceremony.

A. No - just this outpouring of goodbys from everybody. I had a few little gifts that I took outwith me, for example some of the girls did this very fine embroidery with handkercheifs, you know where they pull the threads out and do that kind of embroidery. I had gotten, for tobacco, about a dozen of these made which I used as gifts when I got out. They were very nice. They were beautiful. Caroline had a gift for me. She had a brassiere made for me, made of pongee by one of the women who did sewing. ~~It had to be fit on me.~~ Naturally it had to be custom made - in fact I think I had shorts too. They tried not to let me know what it was, as if I didn't. It would be hard to be measured for something like that and not know. That was a very nice gift. ~~And the dress~~ the dress I got from the prison was a dark brown color, and the color of the pongee of the underwear - it all fit nicely together. The prison administration bit was less emotional - very formal.

Q. Was the warden there?

A. No. Her assistant. And we were escorted to the gate.

Q. Did you see the doctor.

A. Not at that time. No.

Q. What was your farewell to her then.

A. Really nothing, because I didn't know who she was or anything

about her ~~xxxx~~ relationship with Frances Foster until I got out. Then Frances told me.

Q. Then you didn't tell her you were leaving.

A. Actually toward the end I didn't have to see her very much anyway. I very rarely went over there for anything.

With my parents there was a delegation from the Los Angeles International Labor Defense who were going to visit the other women that morning. They were part of the group that met me when I came out. They presented me with a ring which had a hammer and sickle on it. I guess I wore it for a while, but I don't know what became of it. I was very eager to leave. I didn't want to stand and talk to everybody. I wanted to get going. We left the prison. Of course the road from Tehachapi down to Bakersfield was one of these winding roads. I somehow began to talk about the experiences in there so voluminously I never stopped talking. But I did get car sick. I got very car sick. It was not surprising because I hadn't moved much - no big movement at all while we were in there. Also I experienced difficulty with my eyesight which, at first, I didn't recognize. But as we drove up the valley to San Francisco and came across the Bay Bridge which hadn't been there when I left (that was constructed during the year that I was down there) I realized that the eye muscles were apparently atrophied to a certain extent. Even though I was nearsighted I was more nearsighted than I had ever been. I couldn't focus on distance. I was wearing my old glasses, but I couldn't see very well. This was later corrected. It was obviously because of the fact that for that 13 or 14 months I hadn't used my eyes for distance so those muscles ~~get kind of~~ ^{were} weakened. We got to Bakersfield and we stopped for lunch. I knew what I was going to have for lunch. I had known this for weeks..bacon and eggs. The eggs especially were important, and sliced tomatoes and fresh milk and things that I never got in there. We had quite a lunch and then made the trip home. My family, my parents and Rosalie and Rudy didn't get much of a chance to talk at all. They asked questions once in a while. Afterwards they told me they were very much amused by my constant talking and my exuberance despite the fact that I got carsick ^{during} ~~on~~ the first stage of the trip. I felt like a million dollars. I have to tell you that, getting out of there and seeing the Bay and San Francisco. I realized I was a

real San Franciscan. It was a pleasure to get back there too.

Q. Was there a party that night. What did you do the first nite.

A. I don't remember. We had a big dinner. I don't recall what we did. I gradually began to see people. Actually I didn't want to see people too much. It was just being glad to be home. I don't remember we had any kind of reception. There was later something of an official nature with the party people. It was not very extensive because one of the parole conditions was that I was not to participate in any political activity at all, and George was very strict about that.

Q. What were the other parole conditions.

A. Aside from the fact that I had the job which was agreed to by the parole board, and the housing, I had to report to the Sheriff, the City and County Sheriff of the City and County of San Francisco once a month. This was required of all parolees. Involved in that is the making of a financial statement, what you spent, how you spent it, what you did, and checking up on your associations, who your friends were, all of that. This was applied to me at first. This was directed against people who had committed crimes and who had expected possibly to be back into the same field of things. At first the sheriff, whose name was Murphy, adhered to this/ I had to make these financial statements and so on. After the second or third month he greeted me with the question of "How's George?" because he knew George Anderson, and he advised me it was not necessary for me to make these statements any longer. All I had to do was sign in and say I was still doing the same thing. I was still working for George Anderson and still at the same place, sort of reporting on how I felt. We finally got quite friendly. I asked him how he was and he asked me how I was, so that the parole conditions, from the point of view of reports to the sheriff, while they were kind of a nuisance didn't interfere with my life at all. More serious was the fact that there was the restriction of political activity which I adhered to to a very great extent. I didn't participate in most of the activities of the party. I did go to some public meetings which are open to everybody. After a while I met with a group of attorneys who invited me to the meetings

so that I was able to listen to political discussion that took place. I was not allowed to vote. I lost my right to vote as a parolee, and actually was not able to vote ^{again} until 1975. One loses one's civil rights.

Q. What other civil rights did you lose.

A. If you wanted to go into business, for example, you had to get permission, or if you wanted to get married. Anything that was of a legal nature, you had to get permission from the parole board. Nothing like that came up. On civil rights you cannot vote as an ex felon. Not until 1975, and then the right to vote was returned to some half million ~~parolees~~, ^{ex-convicts} ~~not parolees, I mean people~~ ^{time} who had served for federal crimes, at the instigation of a suit which was filed by the League of Women Voters together with a number of other organizations. It finally reached the courts and won, so that unless there were other circumstances that would prevent your returning as a voter all ~~felons~~ ^{exconvicts} had their right to vote returned to them. So it took all that time. In the interim I might have gotten a pardon from one or another of the governors. However whenever that question was reviewed it seemed an inappropriate time to ask for a pardon. When you think of some of the governors - it was not considered appropriate when Warren was governor, I think it might have been achieved, but it wasn't the most important thing that faced either the whole progressive movement or the party, and once I got into it it didn't matter. I did participate in election campaigns. Afterwards I again got into election activities on the part of the party, but the right to vote was lost irrevocably until such time as I either got a pardon or legal action made it possible for me to vote again.

Q. Did you ever try to leave the country.

A. No, I knew I couldn't. I don't know that I could have done it for financial reasons anyway. ~~We never tried. But I couldn't have.~~ I couldn't have gotten a passport.

Q. How did you enjoy working for Anderson.

A. That was a very good experience. First of all George was a marvelous person to work with. ~~He was a~~ I learned a great deal. First of all I became a good legal secretary after a year and a half. He was the attorney for the commercial fishermen here in San Francisco and annually had to participate

in working out the agreements for the sale of their fish to the canneries and to the wholesalers, and so on. So I got into that stage of the work, ~~and was doing that~~. While I was with him he was in court a great deal of the time. You remember the Archie Brown case when Archie was charged with a very serious crime - it might have been ^{a framed-up} murder, I am not sure. It was a serious thing, something, that happened on the waterfront where someone fell out of a window and they tried to pin it on Archie. I am not sure of the facts. George was Archie's attorney. During that time he did work for the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, so that I got sort of an overview of some of the labor cases that he handled. ~~And~~ ^{MA T} there were many personal injury cases for longshoremen. Lots of individual workers came in on personal things. ~~and~~ ^{MA T} then this whole field of his court cases. I was involved in doing the secretarial work, which meant the briefs. ~~And~~ ^{MA T} All of it was extremely educational, plus the fact that it brushed up my technical qualifications tremendously. By the time I ended there I was really a very good secretary.

Q. What else did you do during that time besides work.

A. Well I sort of went back to some of my interests that I had. I was always an outdoor person, and during that year I re-established the habit of going hiking on week ends, going to the High Sierras during the summer vacation. This was a big part of that year. And I lived at my mother's home that year. Rudy, who was still in Southern California, he was the organizer out in San Pedro during that period of time, came up once in a while for a visit. But during all of 1937 he was still in Southern California. I don't remember much else that was significant during that year.

Q. Did you keep in contact with Caroline.

A. No. This was one of the things ~~one~~ ^{one} was not allowed to do. You couldn't correspond with anybody in prison.

Q. Did you work out any way of keeping in contact.

A. There was a certain amount through Elaine who continued to keep correspondence going with her. I saw the letters she sent to Elaine, and communicated my greetings to her through the letters that Elaine sent. Outside of that we were not allowed to have any contact at all. This was part of the conditions of parole. You were not allowed to go back and visit either, at

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any time, even when I wasn't on parole.

Q. So there were still restrictions on you after your parole was completed.

A. Yes.

Q. What happened after your parole was completed. Did you still continue working for George.

A. As soon as my parole was completed the party approached me to come back to work on a full time basis. There was now in the organization department Betty Gannett, head of the department, responsible for both the organizational and educational work, and the party had grown enormously, ~~and~~ they felt that they needed an additional full time functionary in the organization Department. Elmer Hanoff was still there, but Betty was the main person. So I went back to work for the party.

Q. You mentioned the interesting way you got the Dimitroff report to the Seventh World Congress while you were in jail. What was your interest in it after you came out.

A. In jail, of course, we were very pleased to get the booklet and read it with great interest. Now the Communist International Congress took place in August of 1935. It was the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International.

Q. I know this is on record someplace, but can you briefly indicate what was the main premise, or the main premises of the Congress.

A. The Congress actually adopted a new strategical approach to the question of the whole struggle against fascism because in the interim period in January, I think, in 1933, Hitler came to power in Germany which was a development of consternation to progressive forces all over the world. ~~And~~ the question of how did this happen in Germany where there had been such a strong communist movement and social democratic movement was examined everywhere. In addition to that, in view of the economic crisis and what was happening during the earlier thirties people everywhere, particularly the communist and socialist movements, realized that tactics of united action among the workers and the workingclass was a very important phase of activity. The main report that was made to

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to the C.I. Congress was made by George Dimitroff, and in his report he called for united action and a people's front program - united action among the workingclass - and the people's front was a united action between the workers and intellectuals, lower middle class people, the petty bourgeoisie and all anti-fascists with the idea of curbing the development of fascism in countries where it did not now exist, and against fascism and ~~against the potential~~ war preparations which were already apparent both in Germany and in fascist Italy. The Dimitroff report also related ~~this to~~ the question of the defeat of fascism, ^{to} the question of a transition toward a socialist transformation of society by pointing out that capitalism breeds fascism, But ~~with~~ the projection of this popular front, ^{tactic} however, ~~this~~ represented a fundamental tactical shift for the communists. Preservation of bourgeois democracy ~~became~~ against fascism became a primary immediate goal. This had great significance for every country, and in the united States it meant that we should promote and work for a coalition of the workingclass, the farmers, the Negroes, the middle class against potential domestic fascism, and certainly against war. For us in California this all had a great deal of significance because we already had had the experience with the unemployed movement, with the errors we felt were made with the EPIC movement, with the advance of trade union organization and so on. United action on the grass roots level was an important tactical approach to the organization of struggles on all these questions. As early as 1933 we already had great demonstrations against war and fascism in Los Angeles and in San Francisco when such demonstrations were called for by Sherwood Anderson and Upton Sinclair and Theodore Dreiser who called for demonstrative action against Nazi germany and for prevention of war. So we had certain experiences which, while we were discussing this in Tehachapai, we recognized the validity of this approach and welcomed it very much.

Q. Were you in jail when the Spanish civil war started.

A. Yes. The civil war in Spain started in July, 1936, and it was a galvanizing event. We were getting the New York Times in Tehachapai and so we had a very good coverage of what went on in this whole situation. The workers and peasants and intellectuals of Spain had achieved power by a popular front,

government by the ballot, which was part of what was examined by the Communist International at its Congress too. They had won power by the ballot only to find themselves faced by a fascist insurrection. And the fascist dictatorships of Germany and Italy, with the objective of bringing down this popular front government, instigated and helped, aided the Spanish reaction to rebel against the Republic. And on July 16, 1936 the generals and the armed forces, helped by the financial establishment and landowners of Spain, unleashed this civil war. It was seen later to have been the first stage of World War II. The Spanish republic ~~made pleas to the Western democracies, who~~ wanted support from the Western democracies, who nevertheless met these ^h pleas with ^a ~~their~~ policy of non-intervention, which objectively favored Spanish fascism. As I said, we watched it very closely while we were in prison. The war lasted all through the period of my imprisonment and the parole period. It ended with the defeat of the Spanish Republic on April 1, 1939, after three years of tremendous heroism and sacrifice on the part of the Spanish people. This onslaught of world fascism resulted in over one million dead, of which some 400,000 had been executed, a half million people forced into exile, a large number in prisons and concentration camps, and later joblessness and starvation and police harassment that went on for decades. In some respects remnants of it are still happening.

Q. Now, you had finished your parole and were working as a full time party functionary before the end of the war. What did you do personally in relation to Spain. Did you know people that went there.

A. Yes. I should say that, while the American government refused to give help, Americans did not. They gave lots of help. One of the things that was done from the beginning, and things which I was able to participate in, after I got out of Tehachapi and on parole, were the collection of money, clothing, food (sometimes shiploads of wheat were sent), and the funds for all of this were collected at meetings held all over the United States in support of the Spanish Republic and of the people of Spain. The biggest thing that was done from American, and ^{by} ~~from~~ the American people, was the creation of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion made up of American volunteers who

went to Spain to fight along with the anti fascists and the pro republican forces. Literally thousands of young Americans went over there. The Abraham Lincoln Battalion was formed in 1937, and they fought in some seven major campaigns in the Spanish War under great hardship, seldom with any kind of artillery or air support. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade is, to this day, - the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade are honored for their courage in this fight in what is viewed as one of the greatest struggles of the century against fascism. It surely was a precursor, a forerunner, of the heroism that showed itself in the course of World War II.

Q. I have heard numerous discussions on the policy of the Communist Party at this time, and I have heard the criticism that the young men of the Communist Party were decimated. Is it your opinion, in retrospect, that this was a good policy or a bad policy.

A. I should say, in retrospect, and in trying to put my frame of mind into the situation as it was then, that there could not have been any other policy but that. Communists and progressives and anti-fascists from all of the great Western democracies were going into Spain. Even Italians and Germans who were anti-fascists went to Spain to fight on the side of the Republic. The seriousness of that civil war was seen by all the anti-fascists all over the world. It was seen as sort of a primary battlefield against the spread of fascism as a world phenomena. Any dedicated, convinced anti-fascist, and certainly those who fought for socialism, had the dream of socialism, were very much drawn into this in a much more fundamental and basic way, ideologically so and emotionally so, than even the people responding to the conditions of the great economic crisis, which really affected everybody all over. I do 't want to say that the creation of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade was a spontaneous thing. It was not. There was ^{however} almost a spontaneous reaction to the formation of it. It was not difficult to recruit young men to go into this. It was not necessary to make it an assignment that they go to Spain. I was personally somewhat closely connected with this. I had a brother-in-law who went to Spain, and he was eager to go even before the Battalion was formed. Rudy, who was my very close friend, and whom I later married, was in charge of raising

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funds and helping in the transportation of the volunteers to get to Spain. He himself wanted to go. In his case he was told that ~~this~~ ^{the} job that had to be done was his responsibility, and he did it with considerable success. So I was, during that period, very close to many of the men who did go over, many of the men who lost their lives, and whose loss of life was deeply felt. But it has to be seen as part of a war. They were there fighting a just fight. I think that there was no alternative to that policy. I think that it is a great banner of courage that ~~the men who~~, the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade still carry. The ones I know very well now do not feel ^{regrets} that they put their lives on the line (that is what they were doing, and they were prepared to do it) because they saw the great danger to democracy that came from fascism, and which in this instance was raised to an extremely high degree because of the intervention of fascist Germany and Italy in the civil war in Spain.)

Q. Did women go over there?

A. Yes. There were several women, particularly nurses and ambulance drivers, some of them, but nurses mainly. There were some from California. I don't know them. I never got to know them personally. I know there is one nurse who recently came to the Bay Area. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Veterans have an annual banquet, and this one was given to honor the women who had any role in the Spanish war. And there was one nurse there and there was also the widow of Merriman who was one of the commanders of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

Q. When you went back to work for the Communist party in the organization department, this was after Dimitroff's report and toward the end of the Spanish War, what was the party mainly concerned with at that time.

A. The main concerns ^{of} the party were, of course, precisely that. I mean the question of what was happening in the international field. But in California (that was 1938) it was the year of gubernatorial elections. This brought forward great opportunities for continued mass work, particularly around the question of united front from below.

Q. Wait a minute. That's a party term isn't it. What under

the sun does it mean.

A. United front from below is probably just the sort of expression we developed meaning united action and united front on lower levels of workingclass organization or in the community. For example - on the job, in the union, in the local unions, in the neighborhoods, in the assembly districts, among mass organizations of the people. Where communists were active, they were expected to develop tactics in their work which would make it possible for them to work with others around the issues which faced them in these various areas. ~~And~~ ^{We} placed great emphasis on the need to do this as a means of developing the tactical line of the communist international which we were attempting to adapt to American conditions. Because this was an election year it was considered a year that should bring about a change in the administration in California - the governorship. There was one other avenue around which the left wing and the labor movement was fighting. That was to defeat a proposition which was on the ballot numbered Proposition Number One, which proposed a statewide anti-picketing law. This came up in the 1938 elections and was of great importance to both the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organization unions. They developed a counter campaign which brought together the AFL, the CIO, the Central labor bodies and maritime workers, the teamsters, the steel workers, the newspaper men, carpenters, movie stars, railroad men - everybody got in on this. It was strongly defeated in the elections.

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Q. You were talking about the Olsen-Merriam campaign for Governor.

A. Culbert Olsen was running for governor at that time and it was a real all-out effort to defeat Merriam in this round. There had been produced in the EPIC movement a very strong progressive bloc within the democratic party. As a result of the progressive labor political action which developed very rapidly in that period ~~a vast coalition~~ a vast coalition in support of Olsen was created within the ranks of the democratic party. He was nominated and won the elections. In the first week after he was inaugurated, in January, 1939, a large delegation of labor people went up to him to demand the release of Tom Mooney. After some hesitation on his part he finally agreed to the release of Mooney instantly, and within a day or two Mooney was released and returned to San Francisco where there was this tremendous outpouring of thousands of people who marched him up Market Street. There was no parade formation at all. They extended from sidewalk to sidewalk and just filled the streets. This was cause for a great deal of jubliance in the city.

Q. Were you in the march.

A. Yes I was. I was out on parole. It was 1939.

Q. You felt free to participate in the march.

A. By then I was already working for the party again. I am a little ahead of myself. The election campaign took place in 1938 and I was very active in this. We had candidates ourselves on the ballot that year. I was very active in the organization of our people involved, the communist membership - of working out their activities, the activities of the communist clubs, in the neighborhoods, and the united front work by our communist organization in the assembly districts and congressional districts, and so on. This was my major ~~activity~~ activity. Because it was internal activity of organization and educational activity within the party, much of my work was concerned with the activity of the clubs of our party, the small organizations we had all over the cities and in various rural areas.

Q. Did you travel much

A. Yes. I travelled all over the state because I was in the state organization department. I got everywhere in the state.

Q. Let me ask a couple of questions about what you did when you travelled. Who did you stay with.

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A. Usually with members of the party where I went, with the officers of the party in those localities. I frequently represented the state committee in making reports to them, in hearing reports of their work, and attending conventions of theirs, and holding classes.

Q. What did you teach.

A. Marxism, and in that period we were teaching a great deal about the conclusions of the seventh world congress, and of our application of this to the American scene. It was a period when we got interested in the American tradition, the democratic traditions of our country and in a great sense we were for the first time really examining our own history as a nation and the democratic traditions of the American people. We were integrating this into our education about socialism and the aims for socialism. What we studied was Marxism, political economy.

Q. Did you speak much at open meetings.

A. I spoke at party mass meetings.

Q. What kind of mass meetings were there.

A. When the party had meetings they were usually connected with something like the Lenin anniversary, the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, things of that sort. Or open mass meetings during the election campaign. We had meetings under the auspices of the party. I spoke more in the outlying and rural areas than I did in San Francisco. The main speakers here were usually William Schneiderman, who was our district organizer, or Oleta Yates, chairman of the party in San Francisco.

On January 1st of 1938 the Daily People's World was launched. This was a very great development. It was launched as an expression of the united front in a way because it had a larger base than the party itself. Though it was recognized to have been a newspaper that was launched by the communist Party, from its very inception it got support from many CIO unions and some AFL locals, support from the progressive democrats in the progressive bloc in the democratic party, and larger broader community representatives supported the paper in many different ways. The financing of this daily newspaper became one of the big projects of the communist party. And in 1938, when I came back to work for the party, this was a primary

consideration...the raising of funds which annually then absorbed much of the party's attention and its work for the paper. Al Richmond was the editor and was a very young man, but was a very able editor and grappled with the problems of ^{creating} ~~making~~ a newspaper ~~which was a~~ which served both the interests of the communist movement ~~and the communist party as an~~ education for socialism, and the broader movement on many of the issues which still faced the people in California as the result of the economic crisis and ~~and~~ the whole campaign against fascism and war.

Q. Then it wasn't specifically a communist paper.

A. That's correct. It had a loose support (it wasn't an organized support) from broader sources, people outside of the party. But it represented their interests and their ^{needs} ~~views~~, and the readership, of course, was way beyond the size of the communist party. It was at least four or five times more.

Q. We were talking about Proposition No. One and the fight against Proposition No. One. What part did the party have in that.

A. We participated in the same way we did in other things. Our members who were in unions and on the job and so on - this had a very broad coalition in the campaign against it. This was all inclusive, the AFL and the CIO totally fought against it. Of course it went down to defeat which was a great victory, because it was an effort not only to illegalize picketing, but that would have just about taken away the whole right to strike of the labor movement.

Q. I heard an analysis once of this proposition which said it would probably have been defeated, or rendered invalid by the Supreme Court, and the main reason it was put on the ballot was to divert the working people from putting in positive things of their own. What do you think of this analysis.

A. I think that there could be some validity in that. It was definitely unconstitutional and would probably have been reversed by the Supreme Court if it had become a law. It would have tied everybody up in a long procedure. It is undoubtedly true. It was the type of measure that was designed to prevent positive measures on the part of labor in the other direction. It was, I believe, stimulated by those people who were

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also against the provisions of the right of labor to organize under the National Recovery Administration and who attacked the Roosevelt reforms which came along in those years. That was true. I think that makes the defeat of it all the more significant. It was an overwhelming defeat.

Q. Parallel with the election of Olsen?

A. Yes.

Q. Along this period, Hitler was gaining strength all the time. What were your activities in the party as a result of this in Europe - your anti war activities?

A. The anti-war activities were, of course, centered until the defeat of the Spanish Republic, around what was happening in Spain.

Q. This period was the time of the mass organization of the Congress of Industrial Organization Unions. What part did you play in this?

A. Well. My part in that was as part of the leadership of the party which encouraged and worked for that development. I think that our whole approach to the entire period of economic crisis led logically to that. It might be well to summarize briefly the developments of the thirties and what their significance was in relation to this great upheaval in the labor movement and in relation to other aspects of political development which were very important to the American working-class. The thirties was a decade of great upheaval and change for our country, and a period that affected every single American. As advocates of socialism the communist organization turned its attention to organizing these mass movements of the unemployed. It didn't only fight for the alleviation of starvation and joblessness which brought the consciousness of socialism to thousands of Americans. The thirties also saw, with the Roosevelt inauguration, and the right of labor to organize provisions of the National Recovery Act this spontaneous great upsurge of workingclass organization. The communists helped and stimulated this organization, and it began to emphasize the need for coalition in the support of the CIO drive which, under John L. Lewis' leadership, began to organize the mass industries, notably steel, and auto, and

maritime, the electrical workers, along industrial lines. They were organized into unions that were industrial unions, which was a great new development in the American labor movement.

We had learned, as I already mentioned, throughout these years, through experience, that the aim of organizing the unorganized, as was being done now, being organized in isolation couldn't be carried out. And we had this great feeling of the need to join with all the others in a united front.

The Communist International world congress tactic of seeking united fronts was applied in the United States with objectives such as pressing the Roosevelt administration in the direction of a worldwide anti-fascist front. This meant specifically collective security against the fascist axis, and of course to counter the threat of fascism domestically in the United States, and to defeat the efforts that were made by big business to block the trade union organization. All of the New Deal measures which were carried in that period, like the National Recovery Act, Unemployment Insurance, and Social Security, the Veteran's Bonus, and the G.I. Bill of Rights, the system of federal guarantees for all banks within the Federal Reserve System, were considered direct results of the massive movements of the unemployed and of the trade unions in the thirties.

During that whole period we had considerable success with the broader education for socialism. One of the things that happened as a result of this was a considerable growth of the communist party itself. We were an organization nationally of about 7,500 members in the early thirties, 1933 and 1934. By the time 1939 rolled around we had grown to 100,000 members on a national scale. 12,000 of these were in California. We have to say that a large measure of this growth depended on our membership which was a dedicated membership; and on the organizational principles of the party which enabled it to respond to and identify with workers in the important industries.

One important question - in reviewing our activities during the thirties - I had some serious misgivings, though I did not voice them at the time. The Party's advocacy of socialism was based on the Soviet example to the point where we spoke of the objective of a "Soviet America". I felt that our advocacy of Socialism should be based on American realities as they would evolve at the time of transformation to Socialism in the United States.

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As a motivating force for my participation in the party and the specific things which I did within the organization and the responsibilities which I took on were rooted in two main factors: one I was an American woman living and working in such a period of crisis, and I felt that I had a great sense of responsibility to do something about it. Not merely to witness it, but to act in some way. Secondly, being a member of the communist party, I had very strong convictions in the validity of Marxism in the programs and policies of the party.

I have to say that it was in this period, in those years, my personal life became subordinate to the greater needs of the radical movement. Many of my decisions in regard to my personal life were secondary, you might say, to the needs of the party.

Q. Will you be more specific about that?

A. I think so. I could be. I would like to say I should put in one personal thing about the thirties. It was not all work. It was not all moving in the direction of greater dedication to my work as a party functionary. In the early thirties I had a very active extra-curricular life, you might say, in backpacking trips into the High Sierras during those years immediately after my marriage to Fred Doyer. We made one trip that lasted five weeks backpacking into the Mount Whitney country. We were on another trip over Muir pass. We spent a lot of time in Yosemite, in the higher country of Yosemite, until this kind of thing became a luxury because of the crisis and under the years of intensive party work I stopped it.

~~Fred~~ and I ~~got divorced after~~ (we were separated in early 1934) but we didn't get divorced until after my release from Tehachapi, until I was in a position to legally take that step, which was some time in early 1938 as soon as my parole was over.

Q. How did you divorce him?

A. He had left California. He was in New York.

Q. They never went after him?

A. No, they didn't. He came back to California much later, but in that year when I got divorced he was gone. We had different divorce laws in California at the time.

Q. On what basis did you divorce him?

A. The legal basis, which George Anderson worked out, was

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desertion, ~~although it really wasn't desertion, but it was~~^{as} the only aspect of the California divorce law under which the divorce could be granted, since he was out of the state, and I didn't know where he was and had no contact with him.

Q. When he came back, was it an amicable thing, or did he object?

A. ~~Yes.~~^{It was amicable.} In the meantime he had developed a new relationship, as I had. In my instance it was Rudy^E Lambert, and it was a relationship which started before I went to prison. It was after I came out of prison that it became a more solid relationship. We were married on September 30th, 1939. After the parole and my association with Rudy^E, I once again returned to the annual vacations in the High Sierra, and chiefly in the high country of the Yosemite National Park, making Tuolumne Meadows our starting point. This was ^{AN} interest both Rudy^E and I had. We liked the out-of-doors. This made our relationship a compatible thing. We were both in the party, both very active, and both full time people. ~~And in those years I think I have to say they were the best years of our marriage.~~ It was a period of growth politically, a period of party organization benefitting from its broader ~~influences~~^{CONTACTS}, its greater influences, and I think this was all to the good.

In the year 1938 I became a member of the state executive committee of the party.

Q. Were there any other women on it?

A. Yes, there were a few. There was, of course, Betty Gannett and Oleta Yates, and Dorothy Healy. There were more, but I don't remember them all right now.

Q. Can you tell me, was there any particular thing which characterized these women leaders in the communist party from the rank and file women in the communist party? There were A. number of women in the communist party. What was the difference between you women who were leaders and the rank and file members, and was there any difference between you and the men leaders?

A. Yes. First to discuss the women themselves. The party had a good ^{public} policy on women, ~~and had~~^{with} a good program and a good position on women's rights. However the party did not fully succeed in making it possible for women, particularly women with families and children, or women with responsible jobs

outside of the home who were participating in supporting their families, ~~of making it possible for them to participate~~ in the activities of the organization.

There was no difference in the degree of dedication, for instance, of the women who were rank and file members of the party and ~~women~~ ~~leaders of the party~~, women leaders of the party. I think the basic difference was the fact that frequently this dedication and determination expressed itself in a different way ~~by~~ the women who rose to positions of leadership. They were women who were prepared to make sacrifices of a different kind, sacrifices of not having children, of not having what you might call a well-rounded marriage relationship, who made many sacrifices which in those years might even entail, as it did with some of us, imprisonment, and you never knew what was going to happen. I want to emphasize that it was not because their convictions were stronger than those of the rank and file women who were also sacrificing many, many things in the course of their lives in the work of the party. ~~It was~~, I think, ~~it~~ rested a great deal on the individual woman, and the degree to which she was prepared to fight to be a part of the leadership - to project herself into assuming both responsibilities and her rights as a member or a leader of the organization. We did have manifestations of male supremacy in the organization, many manifestations. I think many women can point to experiences. It was ^{generally} taken for granted ^{by most of the men that the women} that their role would be of a technical nature, internal ~~political nature~~, organizational nature without having the opportunity for political development, for taking on political responsibility within the ranks of the organization. I think practically every ^{woman} ~~one~~ can point to such experiences in the course of their life in the party. ~~and~~ If you had ~~an~~ lack of confidence in your capacity to take on these responsibilities, and it wasn't met with a comradely approach on the part of the men you were working with in an effort to bring you forward, you might very well just stay where you were...without having the opportunity for the political growth that ^{should be} ~~is~~ inherent in any kind of organization or in any such collective organizational effort, ~~that is there as you would have in political organizations,~~ or trade unions, or any organizations for that matter.

Q. Did the - could you say that the men gave up certain things too?

A. I think that anybody who was a communist always had the danger of losing his job. Communist leadership always carried problems too, because there was the constant menace of the possibility of having to make a break with the normalcy of life because what you were engaged in was always subject to the attack of the establishment and of the possible laws against the organization, which you could see more graphically in the McCarthy period. However, I don't think that the personal sacrifices that were made by women were as great on the men in the movement, and certainly they did not suffer the effects of male supremacy.

Q. You say you gave the party priorities over your private life. What resulted from this?

A. The one big question that I gave a lot of thought and discussion to was the question of having children. I have to say that in my first marriage the deliberate decision was not to have children because those were the initial years of my dedication to work in the party. I couldn't envision raising a child or children at the same time as I would carry on party work. The severity of the economic crisis also led to illusions, not only on my part but many others, about the imminence of socialism in our country. And it seemed to me to be a wrong time to have children and also be a full time functionary or, as we frequently referred to ourselves, "professional revolutionaries" in that period. Later the indeterminate prison sentence of one to fourteen years was a deterrent in a way. I completed serving the prison sentence in March of 1938 and I was then 33 years old. And though I again gave much thought to having a child and discussed this with Rudie, I again decided that it was not compatible with my primary activity as a communist. I later came to the conclusion that this was an unnecessary, possibly even a tragic, sacrifice. I availed myself of the birth control measures dispensed by the Margaret Sanger clinics when we were in New York during my first marriage. I practiced birth control by that method throughout my childbearing years.

I do not agree now, from this vantage point and in retrospect, with the conclusion that it is impossible to have both a major interest or a career, if you want to put it that way, or an independent life as a wage earned and to be a mother. I think that is not impossible although I believe that it engenders tremendous difficulties, mainly on the women. That is still true, even with all the advances that have been made under the women's liberation movement. I think it still affects the young women now who are trying to make decisions and do have children. It doesn't matter whether it is inside or outside of marriage. It is very difficult for a young woman with a child to raise that child by herself. I think that the progress that has been made in many ways with 45% or 50% of the women working outside of the home in getting mutual responsibility by both parents for the raising of children is great. But it still is a very serious problem.

Q. If you don't mind, I would like to interject this. There were women who did have children. I know there were problems. Did you see any of these problems?

Ken: We stopped the last interview, Louise, on this question - "If you don't mind, I would like to interject this. There were women who had children. I know there were problems. Did you see any of these problems?"

Lam: Yes. I did see some of the problems. Some of them had an effect on the decision I was discussing about whether or not to have children. At that time there were in our leadership three or four women beside myself. There was Oleta Yates, Dorothy Healy, and a number of others. Most of us were childless. There were many, many women in the party, as I have already mentioned, who had children and who were successful in carrying out a certain amount of party activity with honor, and also raising their children. Later more women came into the leadership who did have children, into active political leadership in the top leading bodies of the party.

But it must be said for all of the women who had children, there were great difficulties. We had a rather uneven picture. Some of the women were able to carry on the double burden of work in the organization and the household problems on child care. Others had less success with it and had difficulties with their children for reasons of neglect, leading children to feelings of great resentment toward their parents, and some to child delinquency, and so on.

I think that the sum total of these problems, whether they were those of the women who were able to cope or the women who had difficulty surmounting the problems, arose out of the general situation in society as a whole which did not leave unaffected the party as such. There was a great deal of male chauvinism in the party. And women with children were not given particularly added attention or help. They were not given the opportunity to learn as easily or to be brought forward into leadership, or achieve their right to fulfill their potentials for leadership as well as men in the party.

The thing that was most obviously overlooked was that with the deep convictions these women had and the difficulties they had, they nevertheless remained in the party, and worked in the party. Much of this was done not only because they wanted to be in a movement for socialism, for making a better life for all people, but specifically for making a better life

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for their own children which ^{desire} gave them further stimulation and a further impetus to be active in the movement. So it is a very complex picture and it seems to me that within the party organization we reflected very, very sharply and very clearly the things that were happening in broader society in relation to the position of women in society. The same kind of problems affected ^{our women} ~~them~~, and they were handled mainly in the same way with those few exceptions which I have already mentioned earlier.

It seems to me that even with all the pressures of communist responsibility, if there was emphasis placed on a good close family life with love between members of the family, concern for the young ones as human beings and equals, we had a chance to accomplish much despite the great stresses placed on family life by economic insecurity, job responsibilities, plus the demands of a life of dedication to socialist objectives.

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Q. Did you recognize these problems at the time, and if so what did you do about them?

A. Yes. I think it should be said that I recognized the problems because of the fact that I was in a position where many women came to me with their personal problems, problems that arose in their homes, in their personal relationships, problems that arose in their work, in their clubs or their sections, in relationship with others they were working with, and many times with the men in their committees, ~~because~~ *We* were trying to work out ways in which ~~for example a club, or a group, or a segment of the party organization would effectuate the carrying out of a program).~~ *develop plans for programs in their communities based on special needs of the people.* For example there was a great need for child care centers. They were of vital importance to ~~many of the clubs~~ *women + families both inside and outside the party.* and a considerable movement developed, particularly in San Francisco, for the establishment of child care centers with a very broad united front around it. This was sometimes looked upon as a secondary issue ~~to~~ *in* the work of the party, ~~that there were other things that were far more important.~~ *by the men in the party claiming* I do recall intercepting on occasion into the deliberations of the responsible committees to guarantee that this movement for child care centers could continue under the leadership of the women who had engaged in it and who had effected considerable united activity with Parent Teacher Association organizations and women's organizations and so on, and finally ending with a certain amount of success in winning some child care centers for the pre-school children. This is one example but there are undoubtedly many, many more which could be brought forward. So that the problem of the role of women within the party (the party's public program we all understood) - but the role of women within the party was really almost a constant absorption. I personally had examples of dissatisfaction of the way in which my work was integrated into the leading work. At a later point in my relationship with the party I came into very sharp conflict over the question of my role and the specific work I was doing, which I will deal with ~~when I get to it. at a later point.~~ *(at the time)*

Q. Why did these women come to you?

A. Well there were several reasons. Of course I was the organizational secretary. We also had training schools for leadership. ~~One of the things that we discussed in the course~~

~~of the training school~~ - I was responsible for the organization of the schools and did part of the teaching. The leading people of the party ~~did teaching too~~. *also taught classes in these schools,* Usually we had a session near the end of the school (the full time schools were of one or two week's duration) ~~a session~~ of criticism and self criticism which was one of the ~~main~~ means whereby the party organization attempted to raise the level of work of its membership and of its organizational groups. In this we dealt with, in sort of general terms, what it meant to be a communist, what it meant to be a communist leader, what forms the dedication to the work ^{of the party} takes, and the relationship of this to one's personal life. I must admit that in some respects it was rather a presumptuous area to go into. Yet we were doing it and invariably in class after class the people would come to us individually to discuss some of their problems because they did not feel free enough to discuss them in the group discussion as a whole or in the class as a whole. I can give you an example here of a woman who was a lesbian, and we suspected it. ~~There were two lesbians. They were a pair.~~ It was suspected, but you could not say this - make this accusation without any proof at all. Yet in the course of the discussion it was smoked out. ~~She came to me afterwards in tears.~~ I had used the phrase to describe the behavior of some people as being "not quite normal" and that this affected their relationship with other people, without saying what I meant by "normal". She understood immediately. She came to me afterwards in tears and explained the process of her having become a lesbian. In retrospect, with today's knowledge of this subject, I would never ~~even~~ think of raising such a question; would never ~~even~~ think of being critical of a person for such activity, ^{which is, after all, a matter of personal choice,} But at that time it was a very traumatic experience for her to realize that, though it had been kept a secret on her part, that people knew it and recognized it. This is an example, ~~an extreme example.~~ Or we had an example of someone who was married, had children, and found herself in love with ~~someone else;~~ ^{a leading communist in his county.} ~~she~~ went to a psychiatrist because of this. She spent a whole year with a psychiatrist without being able to resolve the problem of her relationship with these two men at the same time and the problem of her children. ~~She came to me. Although I was in the state office and on the state committee, she should have gone to her branch organizer, or her section organizer, or to someone in the county.~~ She came to me because she had been a student in one

of my classes. My advice to her at this point was that she had to resolve this problem in one way or another; that she was the only one who could resolve it. ~~No one could tell her how to do it.~~ She had to make the decision. She came back a year later (this is now two years) to tell me that, after two years of therapy, I had told her exactly what her psychiatrist had ~~told~~ told her ^{at the end of 2 years.} ~~and she had to make the decision after all.~~ She made the decision in favor of separation from her husband and the consequent loss of her children. Both of these examples are typical one can say of thousands of women everywhere, not only in our movement. I am giving them to show the kind of thing that came to ~~xxx~~ my field of work. ^{on women's problems.} It wasn't said that this was my responsibility, but I ~~had it.~~ ^{it fell into my lap} ~~It came,~~ and I tried to the best of my ability, ~~which was not always correct,~~ ^{to listen to help} and (I can see now that ~~it~~ was not ^{always} correct) ~~I tried to the best of my ability to listen, to help, to give some guidance into what alternatives~~ ^{to listen to help determine} ~~the~~ person had. ~~And~~ ^{the} the alternatives were sometimes very difficult to choose between.

Q. Did you say that women sometimes came to you to ask if they should have a child?

A. Yes. Not only that. We had leading women who asked the state board would it be all right for them to have children. Now in my instance, if someone asked me, I usually asked them if they were very much in love with their husband. Did they feel they had a husband who would cooperate and who ^{also} wanted ~~a~~ the child. ~~And~~ ^{if} If so - go ahead - why shouldn't you? To me, after my own experience and my own feeling that I should never have made that sacrifice I was very, very willing to say to a woman "go ahead - of course you can do it." Especially if you want to. If you want to, you have every right to it. We had a woman who came to the state board to ask permission to have a child. There was a considerable amount of discussion about the fact that this is not the time to have children; that you are dedicated to the life of a "professional revolutionary." There were some who said "she wants a child in order to get out of party work." That kind of thing took place. When I was trying to make my decision it wasn't said. I never asked anybody or talked to anybody except ^{to} my husband. But the atmosphere ⁱⁿ the party was that ^{if you held a position of leadership} you were trying to get out of work if you wanted a child. The atmosphere was ^{usually} that this is not the time to have

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a child. There were examples given - "look at the ~~women~~ in the Soviet Union." A lot of wives of the leaders in the Soviet Union, ~~they~~ didn't have children. The atmosphere was against having families. So, if you had the inclination as I did of being fearful, of not being capable of having both ^{He child} ~~and~~ doing the ^{organizational} work, then you fell right into that. That was definitely the atmosphere in the thirties. I think it ~~has~~ changed with time. I think the compulsion of everything, of the whole women's liberation movement on everybody including the whole left wing has made great differences. To me there have been great advances. But these were some of the kind of things that happened, ^{back in the 30's & 40's} I could tell you still another story. Think of the leadership of the party in terms of district organizers, top leaders of the party in a district or a state. By 1940 there were probably three women district organizers. By the 1950's I don't think there were six. This shows that even as late as that ~~is shows that~~ it was difficult. The women themselves didn't fight hard enough. Certainly the organization as a whole brought token women into the leadership as they brought token black people into the leadership. I, for instance, was co-opted to the national committee in 1940. I was already a member of the state committee and a member of the state board in California. ~~By~~ Together with two other women, (the two women district organizers, ^{then at work in the Party,} one from Massachusetts and one from Virginia) ~~the three of us were~~ ^{I was} co-opted to the national committee in 1940 because they had so few women on the national committee. There was Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and that was about it. So they brought in these women - co-opted.

Q. What does that mean?

A. It means we were not elected. It was decided by the national ^{BOARD} committee to add us to the national committee, ~~I was childless and both of the others were. We were childless women.~~

pending the next regular Convention of the Party when our names would be presented in nomination.

Lambert

Lam: Later, much later, in the McCarthy period, when I was given an assignment to become part of the reserve leadership (I will deal more with that later), the first question I was asked by the National Committee representative was, "Do you have a family?" (What was meant was, "Do you have children?" I said, "I have a family. Of course I have a family. I do not have children." Therefore I was qualified to be put in this reserve committee - a committee of reserve leadership in the event of the communist party being outlawed.

There was one woman to whom it was recommended that she go into reserve leadership. She had a son. She was told at the time of the assignment, "You are to do this, but you must forget you have a son. You must forget you have a husband. You must forget you have a family." Well, she didn't do it. She couldn't fulfill such an outrageous proposal. She fought it out, and got out of the assignment. That happened in the early fifties.

[Part of the tape was erased at this point. We were having a discussion on general subject. Then Louise said something I felt should be transcribed]

Lam: Last time - was it the last interview when I dealt with the work of the communist international? And all I could say for myself was that I greeted it. Or the Spanish Civil War, which is important.

I said some things about what I did then. Not very much, but it was there. Some of the extensive explanations of the Seventh Congress and the Spanish Civil War might be edited out. So much detail is not necessary.

The part that summarizes the thirties also sounds stilted to me. The only thing I want to change there is that I want to say that I felt at the time that the calling for a "Soviet America" seemed ridiculous, because I wasn't foreign born. I was one of the few American born people. It seemed to me we could have a socialist America, but why Soviet? I didn't fit. So I had misgivings about it. I didn't say the misgivings out loud either. I want to make that clear. *

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Since the California Historical Society has decided to leave all oral histories in their original state to be used as primary sources, no editing on the transcripts is being done, except the changes made by the narrator, or slight changes in sentences occasionally.

Ken: We went into your marriage very briefly, and I would like to know just a little more about it. How did you meet Rudie? More about it - that's all.

Lam: I met Rudie in the course of my work in the party. I met him when he joined the organization. When I was working in the party office as secretary (that was in 1931 or 1932) he and his brother and a mutual friend of theirs (Carl Rudie Lambert, Walter Lambert and Melvin Anderson) walked into the party office and asked to join the party. This was much to the consternation of our then leaders of the party because no one did that in those days. They were suspected of being agents who wanted to come in. Rudie and Walter were veterans of World War I. Melvin was some ten years younger than they were. They had been prospecting for gold in both Arizona and in Oregon to make their living, which was about all they did - just enough to make their living. While they were in Oregon they somehow got hold of some literature, these little blue books that used to be issued - you remember?

Ken: Haldeman, Julius?

Lam: Yes. And they got a hold of a lot of those books, and they read them all. They became thoroughly convinced of the importance of socialism. They read all about the Soviet Union, and determined that they were going to go to the Soviet Union because they wanted to help build socialism there.

So they left Oregon and came to San Francisco and established all of their ties with the government bodies to try to get the passports and visas to go to the Soviet Union. It was already the beginning of the economic crisis in the United States. In the meantime there developed this tremendous movement of the unemployed. And I think it was March 6, 1930 that there was the big demonstration that brought around 100,000 people into the civic center. They attended this demonstration and became convinced, as a result of what they saw and heard there, that their place to fight for socialism was not in the Soviet Union, but here in the United States. They were also convinced that the struggle for a change in the economic and political system in the United States was imminent. So they looked up the communist party, and they came into join. Sam Darcy was our district organizer at the time, and to his credit he discounted the suspicion that they were FBI agents. Unfortunately it was hung onto for quite a while by Elmer Hanoff who was the organizational secretary at the time.

Lam: But they were given many tests in order to see whether they could fulfill the membership qualifications and in no time, all of them were in some deep activity.

Walter Lambert ultimately became the state trade union director. In the course of coming to that position he was the main leader of all the hunger marches that were held in California. They were very vast organizational undertakings as was reported earlier.

Rudie was very active in the Workers Ex-Servicements League, and in the marches on Washington for the Veteran's bonus; and by 1933 was made the organizer of the party in Alameda County.

Melvin Anderson was very active in the unemployed movement, and later went to Spain as a Lincoln Brigader.

They passed muster, in other words, with flying colors.

My relationship with Rudie did not really blossom into anything until 1934 when F and I were already separated. In the months preceding and the period immediately after the general strike we had a great deal of work with each other - I from the state office, and he in the county organization. We became very friendly though it was nothing more than that at the time. When I went to Los Angeles it made kind of a break in our friendship.

My arrest and the trial brought things to a head. Rudie was extremely supportive in his friendship toward me, and it was then you might say that our love affair began.

During the year 1935 when I was waiting for the trial, had the trial in February, and from February to November I was in Los Angeles. In view of our relationship he requested to be transferred to Los Angeles, which was granted. He became organizer in San Pedro during some of the wildest days of the vigilante terror there, with many arrests. He was not arrested during that time, but very nearly so. He remained in Southern California during my imprisonment, which started in November, 1935, but his assignment was changed to that of chairman of the International Labor Defense at his request, because he felt that in that position he could do more not only for my release but for the other prisoners who were there as a result of the criminal syndicalism case. He was very critical of the fact that all of these people were put into prison and then the campaign for their release tapered off.

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There was very little done ^{for them} in view of all the other great things that were happening. As organizer of the ILD, he built it up quite a lot in Los Angeles. Of course he was the spearhead of the campaign for the release of all the prisoners, of getting action on parole, of getting action on appeals in the Criminal Syndicalism cases. ~~So~~ When I got out of prison, I had to ~~live~~ ^{under the terms of my parole} live at home with my mother, and he was still in Los Angeles. It took some six months before he got his release by the party from that assignment and came back to San Francisco. By that time I was working in George Andersen's office. We saw a great deal of each other, but ~~we were not living together~~. That came somewhat later. We were not actually living together, but we had a relationship. ^{close, intimate} Then, after ~~the~~ ^{my} divorce in 1938, we got ^{an apartment together} married. ~~We were then living together~~. We finally got married in ~~I think it was~~ 1939.

Q. Why did you think you had to get married? Was marriage the thing that was done then?

A. We at that time, and this is an interesting thing because he and I and Betty Gannet and Jim THORME, ^{who was her husband, got married at the same time.} They had been living together for quite a few years. SHE then ^{the State Office in SF} was the org. secretary in ~~San Francisco~~, but before that had been the organizer in LA, ~~and~~ She met Jim in LA, and Jim was Rudie's very closest friend, ~~and~~ they were ~~like~~ buddies. So when we did get married, we got married according to California law. If you are in a common law marriage you can get married in any church without all the licenses and the whole procedure. So we ^{it that way} did. We got married in Dr. Throckmorton's little church out ~~in~~ the Mission District. We were witnesses for each other. ~~But~~ It was more or less a procedure to make ^{"respectable"} ~~respectable~~ the party leadership. ~~It was a period of~~ ^{to the American people.} In 1939, the Communist International was disbanded. There was an effort to Americanize the party, to make it more acceptable. We were in all kinds of relationships with broader sections of people so ~~the~~ ^{she} idea of living in "free love" was frowned upon. It was one of those periods which is hard to understand now. That is really why we got married, ^{in a legal sense.}

Q. Now that I have your love story I feel better about it.

A. We had a very good marriage I think on the whole. It was

compatible. However it had its limitations, as it would ^{be likely} have in the kind of work we were doing. And ~~there was a negative side to it which~~ As long as I am telling you the whole story, I might as well give you the negative side too. I think Rudie was always somewhat self ^{negating} conscious. He always used to refer to himself as an "ordinary rank and filer". His field of work was raising money for the party and he was the chairman of a committee called the disciplinary committee which was engaged in disciplinary action against people who did things which were considered wrong by the party, although its main idea was to find stool pigeons. He had quite a good record on that, although the party ~~which~~ was obviously riddled with FBI agents from top to bottom, and many of the ^{negative} things which happened to the party may very well have been the result of that. Some of the agents ^{who functioned} ~~which~~ existed in the party during that period when he was responsible for the committee appeared unexposed in ~~the trial~~ the Smith act trial in which ^{Rudie} ~~he~~ was ~~later~~ a defendant. They were on the stand, quite a few. So that there were many who escaped us completely although there were many that were discovered and exposed ^{and} expelled ~~and exposed~~.

Q. Did this affect your marriage in any way - why did this affect your marriage?

A. This didn't affect our marriage in any way except that his work was narrowly in those two fields. He was not a heavy reader. He didn't participate in political discussions. My development went in the development of teaching, of learning and of assuming political responsibility, went much more rapidly than his. There was a certain inequality and I think this had its effect. There were many things we were very compatible about. We enjoyed doing the same things in our leisure time. Our household responsibilities were equally divided. Maybe he did more than I did. We had no problems in that way. We had ^{an} excellent relationship with my mother. His relationship with my mother was an exceptional thing. It was a true friendship so that in all of those respects it was fine. The negative side came in the fact that intellectually ~~and~~ with my growing interests in many many others things, we did not keep step with each other. His interest was baseball when mine might have been philosophy. ..just to give one very extreme example.

Q. Well, we have gotten through your personal life to some extent.

now let us get to what you did in the party after your parole.

A. That was in 1938, ~~and~~ I was to remain in party activity another 20 years until I resigned from the party, ~~which was~~ in 1958, which is now some 18 years ago. I am now 71 years of age and my memory isn't too good on a lot of the things that happened. I have to say frankly that much of the things that happened I have deliberately expunged from my mind as well, and ~~in the past~~ where I will be able to say things about problems that did develop, ~~and things that developed~~ and my reaction to them, ~~and~~ what I did about them, I think I will ~~now~~ be benefitting to a certain extent from hindsight, ~~so~~ This has to be taken into consideration as I talk about it. One of the things that ~~comes out~~ always ^{happens} when you are involved in a political movement ^{which} is responding to the issues raised by the ~~current~~ ^{political and} events, ~~and the~~ economic problems, is that it necessitates total dedication by the members of the party, and the leadership particularly, ~~of the party~~ in reacting to these issues. In my case my personal role continued to be one of trying to fulfill responsibilities which involved all of these programs and campaigns over these several decades which I now still faced - these next twenty years, ^{between 1938 and 1958.} Now I am saying "trying to fulfill" because I wasn't and I never considered myself to be a ^{full pledged} political leader or a Marxist theoretician, or anything like that. Partially I lacked the confidence to pursue many of ^{these areas} ~~these things~~. ~~Partially~~ I was very slow in learning that I could do political work. ~~And the~~ Lack of experience ~~I think~~ slowed me down too, to a certain extent. My greatest strength, ~~and~~ (I have to say this with some modesty, however, because it wasn't that great) ~~my greatest strength~~ was that I had a certain degree of organizational ability which was very useful in the inner party work, in the organization and planning of the day to day, down to earth activities. Now my husband, as I have already indicated, was also involved in full time party work during the same 20 years, which made it possible for us to pursue an active political life without any of the conflict that might ^{have} developed if we were in different spheres of ^{work altogether} ~~responsibility~~. Now I have to make a comment which might sound odd. ^{But} As the years go by my conviction that this was the case grows stronger, and stronger. Neither of us were religious people. My husband's ~~was~~ ^{was} Lutheran as a child. His family were Lutherans.

Lam: I was an athiest with this long history of four generations of athiesm. We were not religious people. Yet, in looking back, I have to say that our relationship to the communist party was just as religious in character as the relationship of a Catholic is to the Catholic church. It was a religious dedication which engendered no kind of disagreement. It meant that we accepted what came from above wholly without ever asking, "Is this correct?" We would say to ourselves, "Why is this correct?" Never asking, "Is it?" I think this accounts for the very narrow and dogmatic way in which many communists behaved themselves in relation to non party people.

When I listen to Seventh Day Adventists who come to my door and they keep repeating all the stuff they have in thier books, it means absolutely nothing. It sounds like so much gibberish. I am sure that when we carried on some of our agitation we sounded the same to people. Dedicated, devoted, absolutely sure that what you are saying is the only answer, it's god's answer to everything. With us it was the party's answer. So we were in effect really ensnared in a religious attitude toward the party.

Ken: I suppose I ask this of each section of your life - did you ever have misgivings about any of these things?

Lam: Yes, I did. On this question I have to say that the discipline was sometimes very irksome. The "party line", the party position and policies came through the conventions and reports to the lower organizations members, with never enough free discussion about it. A lot of this I put down to my inexperience, or limited capacities. I didn't always feel adequate to understanding fully both the way the party leadership functioned and how policy was arrived at by our national leaders. I had lots of questions, but I never articulated them, out of modesty, or lack of aggressiveness, or whatever. I went along with this state of affairs and must therefore also share some of the responsibility for the lack of democracy in the organization.

Lam: I think I should add another point to go back just a bit. Since my parents, my grandparents and my great grandparents were all freethinkers, athiests, and socialist minded, I have to say the same thing about them even though they were not under the same kind of discipline that I was in the communist party. There was a much greater freedom in the organizations and movements to which they belonged, including the socialist party. But their concept of socialism was almost a utopian dream. Their god was Karl Marx.

I even have a small example of my father coming to me after the war when East Germany became communist (after the red army took over). He got a letter from one of his relatives in Dresden with a postage stamp on it with a picture of Karl Marx. He made a trip all the way from Marin Country over to San Francisco to see me in the party office, where I was working, to show me this postage stamp which symbolized great progress for him.

I don't want to negate the concept of the objective of socialism and the working for it (which I still agree with), but the way in which we felt about it, the character of our reverent convictions and of trying to effectuate progress in this direction was religious in essence.

Ken: Let's go on then with the narrative of your life - the next section of it.

Lam: Well, in what I have to say now I will not try to make any chronological reconstruction of each development because it's impossible. But I want to deal with some of the outstanding periods of crisis for the party during World War II, how it affected its members and myself, and what appears in retrospect as the gradual and inevitable decline of communist influence and communist membership, finally so drastic as to cause virtual impotence of the organization as a viable movement of the working class for socialism in America.

Ken: Did people react in their criticism of the party by simply leaving it? You either adhered to the line or left, is that it?

Lam: Yes. When I indicated before the tremendous growth of the party, where it became at its height an organization of

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100,000 members nationally actually, if there were records available, and there probably are, ^{most of} those 100,000 ^{came} ~~went~~ in and ^{later} ~~went~~ out. But, in addition to that, there were at least another quarter million that went in and out of the organization, ^{during} in the period of its existence. ~~for such reasons.~~ ^{Actually for such reasons.} ~~for many reasons.~~

Q. Are they actually a political force in the country to a certain extent because they think in certain lines yet?

A. Many of them do, I ^{guess} ~~think~~, but largely as individuals, ^{now} ~~connected with other movements, such as the new left & similar groups~~

Q. Well here we get to the Munich Pact and the war. ^{even the Democratic Party}

A. The forties and fifties ^{revealed} ~~and very~~ tempestuous developments ^{or none at all}

in our country and in the world equal to what happened in the thirties, ^{if not more so -} world war II, ^{etcetera} and the cold war. For example by the late thirties, the party had achieved a certain stability in the organization, in the leadership, in its influence among large sections of the workingclass, and ^{among} the blacks, anti-fascists, professionals, political independents and so on. There was a national organization. We had districts which were largely made up of states or a group of states. Within the district there were county organizations. There was a solid leadership corps throughout the whole nation. ~~And~~ In the activities of the party there was a certain rhythm because now you have a more mature organization than can be said of the thirties. My responsibilities as ~~an~~ org. secretary here in the state, ^{the} which was on the state level, embraced many of the so-called rhythmic activities, things that became the daily routine of the party. Outstanding here would be the election activities. We were after all a political party. We ran candidates, we had platforms, we got out literature, we ~~got~~ ^{radio} ~~had~~ broadcasts. ~~And~~ In 1938 and again in 1940 we had candidates.

I don't have the names and the material, but this can be looked up - the candidates and the election results. I think it was in 1940 that we did not achieve the percentage ^{of votes} necessary to ^{remain} ~~keep~~ the party on the ballot. ~~We lost our place on the ballot.~~ In any event in those several years this occupied a good deal of my time. ~~This was what I was doing.~~ Along with this were the campaigns that we developed for the People's World. ^{The PW} ~~This~~ was our newspaper - a paper that had a broader audience, ^{then just the Party as} ~~which I mentioned earlier~~ ~~think~~. We had an annual campaign to raise money for the paper and

an annual campaign to get subscribers for the paper. This was also something which fell in the orbit of my committee's work.

Q. When you were in the party during this whole period of inner organization did you ever feel restive, or want to do anything else. Did you feel stuck?

A. There were times when I felt stuck. There was so much to do. Yes, there were times when I would rather have been doing something else.

Q. Did you ever ask to do anything else?

A. ^{there were} I got some shifts of responsibility from time to time, but it never occurred to me to do anything else outside of the party. There were shifts in the responsibilities I had and I was given greater responsibilities and relieved of others, or set up committees for handling things, like the People's World. ~~There were committees, but I was on the committee.~~ I tried to coordinate the work ~~and that kind of thing.~~ ^{of the various sub-committees in the organizational field.}

Q. Did the shifts come at your instigation? ^{instigation?}

A. I think some of them came at the instigation of the leading committee when it was seen that one person couldn't do all these things. Or if I raised the question, which frequently happened that we had to have a committee, or we had to have more full time people. We had a growing corps of full time people. For instance, Leo Barroway was brought in specifically to take care of the membership angle and of the relationship to the ^{circulation of the} People's World. The recruiting of new members was also a campaign once a year although we tried to recruit members all year round. The inner educational activities of the party were also handled by the org. department. But in this field I did a great deal of the work myself. This was one of the things I concentrated on. This involved new members classes, the holding of classes on a weekly basis before there was a school. Ultimately there was a school established outside of the party which taught Marxism, but also taught labor things - the California Labor School. But at the time that I am talking about the classes were organized by us. We had the training schools for leadership for the lower organizations, ^{like the} sections, clubs and so on. We had lots of mass meetings and street meetings. ~~Many most~~ of these were not organized ~~from~~ ^{by} the state office. They were organized by the county organizations, sections and clubs. But a certain amount of the coordination of all this did come through the state org. department. We had enormous sales of literature.

a full-time educational director was selected finally to take over many aspects of this work

In California we sold more literature than New York did. We sold pamphlets and booklets about everything you could imagine, issues in this country and Soviet materials. But we had lots of pamphlets, cheap pamphlets like on the Negro question, on socialism, and all sorts of things like that which we sold by the hundreds. We had bookshops, which also came under the purview of the org. department. My work was also in relation to the org departments of the main counties. I worked closely with the org. secretaries of San Francisco Los Angeles and Oakland, and worked directly with the county committees of all of the rural communities. There was an exchange of conferences and we always had conferences and publications, bulletins and things of this sort for exchange of experiences.

Q. How was this done..was it on how to do the work or how to decide on the policy of what to do?

A. Mostly it was how to do the work. First of all it was to explain the policy which came from the national committee or the state committee or the conventions of the party - to explain them to the lower bodies. This is where the thing came in - you could express your opinion as a member, but by the time you had a chance to express your opinion as a member the policy was already adopted. If you went to the convention as a delegate you could speak on the main report which was presented, but your speech was expected to be something that would enhance the report, strengthen the policy or something like that. You didn't ask questions. It just wasn't done and if there ^{were} people who disagreed and who disagreed violently, pretty soon there was some action taken. They were either removed from ^{their} position or they were expelled from the party ~~xxx~~ if it was a serious enough disagreement with the policy. In the lower organizations like the clubs and the sections, and in the rural counties especially ~~I can remember with them~~, where there were very small organizations, they had very little mass influence and very ~~little~~ ^{few outside contacts,} ~~connection~~. With them it was mainly a question of telling them what happened elsewhere, urging them to raise money or ~~urging~~ them to recruit people, and even trying to help them to work out a plan of action that would implement the policies for their area. They had so few mass contacts that the people who joined the party in those areas joined almost ^{wholly} on the basis of personal contact and personal friendship with ~~someone~~ ^{someone} inside the organization, not as a result of activity which brought them into action in collaboration with trade union groups or trade

union members or workers on a great scale. In the thirties we recruited lots of agricultural workers into the party. This did not happen in the later periods. Though ^{Party branches existed} ~~they were~~ in the agricultural areas they had no contact with the agricultural workers ^{at all,}. They did not have sufficient contact with what was the main base of the workingclass. This was especially true in the outlying counties. This was gradually changed in places like the Santa Clara Valley which became more and more ~~xxx less orchards and more~~ ^{the orchards disappearing} and more industrialized. There was a great influx of Mexican-American workers into San Jose. There the very compulsion of this kind of growth forced our people into relationships which brought about a change.

Q. I understand that every time the party had a new policy or a new method you changed your method of work. Did the organizational structure change?

A. The organizational structure didn't basically change. ~~But it did which I will come to. It was the second big crisis during the war. It did not basically change. The changes were you would~~ ^{changes were made} ~~strive to make the changes in the way the party functioned.~~ ^{however,} When I say that the structure remained the same it meant that our basic organization, which was the club, remained the same. However sometimes the territory for which ^{a club was} ~~they were~~ responsible changed from a proscribed neighborhood to an assembly district. Or, in the case of industry, we attempted to have organization within industries. In other words a club within the longshore industry, or a steel mill, and so on. In instances like that where we had such shop organization within a specific plant, and even within certain industries, ^{sometimes} ~~changed~~ had to be made because they were penetrated by stool pigeons. I remember the shop club in the steel plant in Pittsburg was infiltrated by a stool pigeon and the whole group lost their jobs. In the field of industry, ~~let us say like the warehouse, longshore and so on, and other industries,~~ steel, electrical, the auto industry, and so on, there were branches of party members in these organizations who functioned as long as it was possible to avoid the kind of penetration that made many of them lose their jobs. It was a difficult thing to do. We also had some branches in professional fields which could not function publicly because of the possibility of their means of making a living being completely wiped out. ~~This was true of many of the industrial workers, too.~~ ^{as mentioned above,}

A. I think you have pretty well covered the party organization.

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A. Up to one point which I would like to bring in because at this point we in California did something which I think was a little bit ahead of some of the rest of the country. The party continued to project its socialist objectives. But we made an effort to enrich our knowledge of American history to trace the traditions of American democracy, the true meaning of the American revolution and the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence; the economic development of the nation so we could see where the working class came from. And very important was the matter of the Negro people in America and the subject of black liberation. Now this area of questions was one in which I was ~~personally~~ ^{and} involved ~~because I~~ personally undertook the research and preparation of materials on these American traditions and Negro history questions and their rights for use in our propaganda and our classes. Now on a national scale a great deal more was done on these subjects in those years, mainly Aptheker's work on the Negro question, which is outstanding, and there were many books and ~~things~~ ^{materials} that came out. But at the time this was done, ^{in California, it} ~~this~~ was at our initiative, and you might say a special contribution ~~that came from California in its beginning stages.~~ ^{phases of study of our nation's history & development, especially from a Marxist point of view.} Then there was one event which I want to record because it has a special meaning for me. This was a special class that I had the privilege ~~to~~ ^{to} attend ^{with} along with a group of other women. We were mostly women. I don't ~~think~~ ^{remember} any men ~~joined~~ ⁱⁿ this class. For a period which extended over several months on the history of philosophy, ^{the class} ~~which~~ was taught by Beatrice Kinkead. She was engaged in translating ~~this~~ ^a book ^{on this subject} from Russian into English. In our educational work in the party we adhered so closely to ~~what was taught in schools in the Soviet Union that we never really had~~ ^{the Marxist classics, and Lenin's and Stalin's works} ~~any~~ look at the broader aspects ^{or of contrary viewpoints} of all of history. We frowned upon books like Toynbee's and we frowned on reading books that would give us a different ~~and a broader~~ point of view. We would stick always to the classics of Marxism. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin - this was our reading material. What has to be done, and the Foundations of Leninism; these were our bibles. ~~So that~~ This course, which was brilliantly taught by Beatrice Kinkead, opened up a whole world for us. I know that Oleta and I particularly appreciated this, and I do want to record it because I think this too was a deviation from the normal kind of inner education that

~~that~~ the party attempted.

Q. Did you want to talk some more about party policy?

A. Yes. There were two principles which were guiding principles in our organizational work which had something to do with the direction that the American party took and with all of us in our relationship to it. We proclaimed ourselves as the "vanguard of the workingclass." Now this idea of being a vanguard is something which was developed by ^{Lenin and} Stalin in Russia, ^{when} ~~and where~~ the communist leaders expected that there would be insurrection in many other capitalist countries after the Russian revolution in the post World War I period. ^TThey were giving the communist parties some guidance on how to achieve this in their countries. ~~And the~~ concept was not only to lead the ~~people~~ ^{people} to socialism, but to help in the elaboration of strategy, tactics and program during the pre-socialist period. Now the communist party of the United States in ~~adopting for itself and~~ proclaiming itself the "vanguard of the American workingclass" ignored the distinction between the United States with its organized labor movement and Russia which had no organized labor movement, which had an unorganized working class, ~~if it had a workingclass which was very small in Russia, and it was~~ Such a self image of being the vanguard might conceivably give strength and coherence to the organization, and make ^{for a} unified organization, ^{it also,} as a matter of fact, ~~it~~ developed ^a great amount of distortion in the relationship with other organizations, particularly trade unionists. We would come along and say, "We are your vanguard," ~~where we had never done~~ ^{before having done} anything to earn ~~this being the~~ "vanguard of the workingclass". It was a very arrogant concept and created some very dictatorial methods of work and of working with other people, ~~and forced~~ ^{It placed} many people into the position of being forced to carry out what they were told - ^{namely} ~~that~~ this is the party line - this is what you do in your union - because we are the vanguard and we know what the right answer is. People ^{they saw no way of fulfilling this concept in their unions.} withdrew from the party because ~~of that~~. People lost their positions of leadership and influence in their unions and on their jobs, and it worked in the opposite ^{direction} of what it was intended to ^{accomplish}.

Q. Did you think this at the time?

A. I must say I did not think this at the time. I saw some of the consequences of it, losing members and so on. I did not clearly relate it to this idea. I thought the American communist party was the vanguard of the working class. It had to surely

earn that position, and we were, in my opinion, in that period, in the process of earning it. But the errors that stemmed from it I think became clear to me much later, not at that time. I am bringing it in now because I think it lays a basis to show what happened, a weakening of the party. *I* I think the same thing can be said about another organizational principle which a lot of people talk about. I know that in the "new left", as it is termed, there is a lot of discussion about this. It is the principle of democratic centralism which very simply meant that once a decision is arrived at in the organization, democratically arrived at, it has to be carried out by everyone loyally whether they agree with it or not. When I say it was democratically arrived at I mean it was arrived at in convention, or in special conference, or in special meetings. It might be a state committee, or a national committee, and so on. Gradually this became, however, more centralism than democratic. There was no democracy. I mean as things began to work out in the party you could feel that the idea was a very good one. *For the Soviet Union* It worked with good effect because it was a source of ability to act as a cohesive, coordinated, disciplined movement which was dedicated to one simple proposition. But when you carried it out in a country like ours, and followed this kind of thing with such fervency as was done, in time it developed extreme centralization, the tightest autocratic control and beaurocratic rigidity that you could imagine. The leaders made the decisions, they handed down the party line. The leadership was self perpetuating without any genuine democratic election of leadership. ~~And~~ *The* whole organization with such a centrally controlled apparatus, ~~while it~~ *which* responded rapidly to the specific tasks that were set, and seemed to be highly efficient, actually ~~it~~ only created very profound problems which resulted from the stifling of free democracy, the lack of free exchange of ideas, and from beaurocracy on all the ~~levels~~ *ing* of the party.

Q. You were part of this rigid thing, weren't you?

A. That is right, and I was part of carrying it out. Part, not only of being subjected to it as everybody else was, but I was part of the system that carried it out, and played my role extremely well. Any beaurocratic system in any organization is sort of a self-perpetuating thing. It has all those delimiting *ing* things as we can see with the big government bureaus we have *factories*

Lam: now on every front. It was especially bad in our party, I think. The fullest revelation of the limitations of this vanguard role in the United States and the application of democratic centralism as we carried it in the United States came with the revelation of Stalin's role in the Soviet Union when that whole "cult of the individual" came out in Khrushchev's report on Stalin after Stalin's death. But that is pretty well known. Everyone knows about what happened to Stalin and what happened at that point. I think to us as individuals, as participants, as victims of it, when the revelation came we had many battles. I can remember many incidents where, particularly in the period of McCarthyism, discipline was applied and you were threatened with expulsion if you did not abide by the decision. Great harm was done to individuals and to people with this distorted idea of the "party says so. You do it."

Ken : How did you feel about this at that time? You must have had friends that -

Lam: Oh, yes. One very dramatic incident in my family. Walter Lambert was in World War II. He enlisted after it became a "just war." Although this was his second war (he was in his forties), he enlisted. He was in Europe during the whole period, and when he came back he was completely out of step with the party - not necessarily wrongly so, but he was out of step. He disagreed with the party's policy in a situation in the Machinists Union. He disagreed with it violently. He was a very determined man when he disagreed with something. He disagreed to the point where measures were taken for his expulsion from the party. Rudie, chairman of the disciplinary committee that had to review the charges against Walter, set the line and the committee carried out the expulsion. It was a very traumatic experience for Rudie who was very devoted to his brother. This is a very

dramatic example. Things like that were extremely disturbing. Yet one accepted them because it was the way of life in the organization. If you came out in protest, then you were also suspect. You were also suspected of being ~~an~~ undisciplined ~~one~~ ^{if} in disagreement with the party, and we could not brook disagreement on any major question. There were lots of disciplinary actions against people for minor infringements which ^{were} ~~are~~ senseless, just senseless. We felt that sometimes, I know that I did. I thought, what are they doing, what are we doing? But here I was just like everybody else, part of this system and fulfilled the role as best I could.

Q. What did you say Oleta said about this period?

A. Well, Oleta made this comment a little bit later, at the time when the outburst came, when the revelations about Stalin came out. And when we had to re examine our organization with a fine tooth comb in what we did. She said, and I think it was an awfully apt description, that the communist party is like a compression chamber..you compress everything into the same model, into the same thing, and it has no relationship with anything else.

Q. Do we have time to go into the Munich Pact a little bit, or the war.

A. Yes. I would like to go into that because this sort of leads to the two major ^{crises the party faced during the war} ~~things, the worst things that happened.~~ I want to give illustrations of a couple of big things that happened during World War II which illustrates some of the conclusions we have just been discussing about the limitations of the party. ~~In 1938~~ ^{in 1938} I think we can say the war really began. The big thing we ~~saw~~ ^{was} the ^{signing} ~~same~~ of the Munich Pact which allowed the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia ^{by Hitler.} Six months later came the fall of the Spanish Republic. The Japanese invasion of China was moving forward. Here on the Pacific Coast because of ~~that~~, the nearness of the Chino-Japanese war to California, we instituted some action which was in line with our anti-war position. On the Pacific Coast we stimulated demonstrative action by the unions and others to bring about the halt of shipment of military supplies to Japan, and succeeded in temporarily doing this. This was a good chapter, I might say, of our work as ^{limited as} ~~as~~ it was in terms of war as a whole.

Q. During that period wasn't there a boycott of silk too as part

of this boycott against Japan? How did you feel about that?

A. Yes, there was and we felt very strongly about that, and we knew that in this instance we could set an example of a kind. So a campaign was started to stop wearing silk stockings, (Those were pre-Mylon days) and to wear lisle stockings. I can again say this was quite a successful campaign, and way beyond party limits.

Q. Did you talk to any women about how they felt about wearing lisle stockings?

A. They hated it. Most of them hated it. They were uncomfortable and they were not attractive, but it was an anti-war act. ~~And~~ In this sense it was something tangible that could be done.

Q. What about if a member who was a woman didn't wear lisle stockings?

A. She ~~was~~ ^{was} pretty well ostracized by all her comrades. I don't recall that there were any disciplinary actions, but I think the women were afraid not to wear lisle stockings in that period. It was a very demonstrative action just like a meat boycott might be if the meat prices went up, or something like that. Here it was an anti war action wich was, as strange as it might seem, an effective action.

Q. What other things, then?

A. Then, of course, ~~we were in the war.~~ ^{war was inevitable.} With these actions we were closer to war than ~~anything.~~ ^{at any time.} I don't want to deal with everything in the war because it is just too much. But symptomatic of the deep problems that affected the party, ^{as stated earlier} there were two major crises which shook the party from top to bottom and ~~xxxxx~~ the full impacts of which were never overcome. The first of these came with the signing of the German-Soviet nonaggression pact which took place in August, 1939. This came about because the Soviet Union had been trying to get an anti-Axis security pact with Britain, France and the United States, and their efforts collapsed. So the treaty with Germany was a diplomatic necessity for the Soviet Union in the hopes of ^{lessening} ~~lessening~~ the danger of the Nazis turning Eastward against them. On Hitler's part, who hated communism and the Soviet Union, ~~the motivating factor,~~ there as proven later by all the documents that were seized after the war, his main motivation was to protect his rear while he was moving westward. When ~~this took place, this pact,~~ ^{the Soviet - German pact was signed,} the Communist party was ^{thrown} ~~in~~ complete confusion, both the leadership and the membership, and for a few days we didn't know what to do. I

remember I was at that time, the night that the news came, I was speaking in Pittsburg, California, at an International Women's Day meeting, and my speech was about International Women's day and all that, our women's program, and so on. On the radio of the car, ^{while driving} ~~going to~~ Pittsburg, the news comes across. ..the non aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union. My immediate thought was I might as well throw my speech out the window, but what will I say about this? I was just simply floored. Here we had been for years - our whole campaigns against war and fascism were directed against German Nazism, against Mussolini's fascism in Italy, but particularly Hitler and all the things that happened under Hitler, and it was hard to understand. Well, I got to the meeting. There was a table full of literature set out, and I could do no better than to give my speech. This was what the meeting was called for. I made no reference to the news. The first question in the question period was - "What does this ^{fact} mean?" I had to think awfully fast. I looked down at the literature and ~~I thought, well now~~ quickly I thought the best I could say was that we have got to hear the ^{before drawing any conclusions,} whole story. We have only heard this announcement over the radio. We don't know what has really happened. I cannot presume to answer until I know what the facts are, until we know what the Soviet Union's reasons ^{were.} Then my eyes fell onto a little pamphlet written by Stalin called non-aggression or something like that - a policy for non-aggression. So I picked it up, ^{and} I was familiar with it. There was a paragraph which gave as one of the facets of Soviet policy the seeking out of non-aggression pacts with all of its neighbors, mutual non-aggression pacts, for purposes of protecting the great achievements of socialism in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union would never challenge another country's independence, but they felt the need for ^{these} ~~these~~ non-aggression pacts especially in view of the fact that they could not get mutual collective security with the ^{big capitalist} ~~other~~ countries. So I picked the pamphlet up and I read this paragraph and said "the best I can do is give you this explanation of Soviet policy. Beyond that we will have to see. We will have to wait until the answers come." Nobody was really satisfied. ^{my explanation} ~~I gave an idea~~ a general view of Soviet policy, but with Hitler? Q. Were you? A. Neither was I. I thought, what next? As it worked out, the policy which was finally adopted ~~was to~~ - Well, first of all, let me say one thing. We were burdened with the fact that throughout

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our history we defended every act and every policy of the Soviet Union. We were emulating the Soviet party, you know. ...on all these things we have already talked about. And my personal reaction all that night ~~when~~ (I didn't sleep) and the next day when we all got together - ~~here again I felt~~ *I again* this great sense of ~~deficiency~~, inadequacy to understand politics on an international scale - to understand the kind of politics the Soviet Union was undertaking. I could understand non-aggression, and I could see (many of us recognized) that it ~~xxxxxxx~~ was a diplomatic move on the part of the Soviet Union. But where did it leave ~~this~~ *the* analysis of the war we had made and on which we were basing all of our policies?

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Q. Ok - you may proceed.

A. Well, we always judged wars on one simple basis. A war is either an "unjust" war or it is a "just" war. In other words, we were not automatically pacifists against all wars. The war against fascism was a "just" war. The war against Nazi Germany in its dismemberment of Czechoslovakia or its invasion of Poland and so on put us in the position of being against Germany, against ^{those acts of} ~~that~~ war. ^{and it} That was a just battle on the part of the other countries against ^{the} ~~them~~ ^{Nazism}. So here we had a situation where our ^{great socialist country} ~~greatest ally~~, our mentor you might say, the Soviet Union, is lined up with fascism. What does this do to our characterization of the war? The result was that the leadership of the party changed the characterization of the war to one of being an imperialist war on both sides, which meant that now both sides would be opposed without distinction. ~~And~~ Roosevelt's course during this period was to favor Britain, so the Party placed its major emphasis on that side as the main enemy, again reflecting support of the Soviet stance as it was now. And we muffled our anti-fascist position. We practically set a moratorium on all of our anti-fascist criticism. ~~And~~ ^I In this we lost great credibility and confidence among our membership and followers. This was one period where we lost members and hundreds of sympathizers. It was a period of complete ~~by~~ misunderstanding - what were we doing?

Q. How did you feel about it?

A. Well. I felt the same way. It was pretty bad.

Q. The same way as who? You didn't think about leaving, did you?

A. No. I didn't think about leaving, but I found it very difficult to explain our position. I found it extremely difficult to explain what made it a war of imperialism on both sides. Where did it leave our struggle against fascism? How did we struggle against fascism within that framework? We took a position that was very much like ^{that of} ~~the~~ administration. There was an election going on - a national election - ~~an election into the~~ ^{the two Presidential candidates,} Roosevelt and Wendell Wilkie, ~~who were the candidates for~~ ^{President,} both ~~of them~~ promising the American people that the Americans would not enter this war, ~~that our boys wouldn't enter into it.~~ We, the Communists, during that period of the

Lam: non-aggression pact, until the time when Germany did attack the Soviet Union, were saying, practically the same thing. You will remember what our big thing was out here, "The Yanks Are Not Coming". There was a pamphlet published by one of the organizations in the area which we gave a big push to. All sorts of things going on which put us virtually in the same position. It was during the period characterized as the "phony war." Fascism remained fascism. Hitler's drive for world conquest continued. He blitzed Poland; England got in the war. France got in the war. Then came the surface appearance of calm, what was called "the winter of illusion." Then Germany invaded Norway and the low countries and forced France and Belgium into surrender, and finally turned eastward. Germany attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. And the consternation at this point was even greater than at the signing of the non-aggression pact between Germany and the U.S.S.R.

Now everyone felt, now we can help the Soviet Union. Now America has to get into the war. And, of course, with Pearl Harbor, it did.

The party, with its policies emanating from the way it characterized the war, now had to change from characterization of the war as between imperialist powers to a war against fascism again, or a war of Germany against the Western democracies, including, most important of all, the Soviet Union. So it necessitated a flip-flop on our part - a complete flip-flop overnight. We had to come out and say this was an unjust war against the Soviet Union, Britain, France, et al. The anti-fascist aspects were raised to the top again, and once more we found ourselves in full identification with the Soviet resistance to the German aggressiveness to the relief of everybody. Now we could understand it again because it was in keeping with what had gone on before the Soviet-German non aggression pact.

Ken: What happened to the Yanks Are Not Coming?

Lam: That idea disappeared like water under a bridge. It was just gone.

Ken: Were you relieved then?

Lam: Yes, of course I was because what happened then was that we had a clear cut line of action. There was unification of what was left in the party. We won back some of the people who had left us in abhorrence. The United States entered the war with Pearl Harbor, and the Grand Alliance emerged and a lot of the damage was repaired and hundreds of our members either volunteered into the army or were drafted, and they were very heroic in their participation in the war.

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Q. Well, Louise, this is the beginning of the war, and I think this is a good time to stop and ask a question which I have been meaning to ask you for quite a while, and that is we have all your political life and your relationship with your husband, but we don't have anything about your social life. It wasn't all work and no play, or was it?

A. No it wasn't. We had quite an active social life as a matter of fact. I should say that we had lots of friends, but the majority of our friends were also party people. We enjoyed the relationship with several friends who were not party people. I think one of the reasons was that we had varied interests. It made for a more stimulating kind of interchange. One of the things we did - we always seemed to have a gathering of people at our home practically every Saturday night. One of Rudie's very closest friends was Melvin Anderson who joined the Party with him and who was a Lincoln Brigader. He had been a veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He had been in Spain and had a brother who was a District Organizer in Michigan. Melvin was in the merchant marine. ~~And~~ whenever he came to town he usually arrived at our home and brought with him several of his co-workers. So we had sometimes as many as a dozen seamen at the house. Because we didn't have a large apartment and not a large dining table our dining arrangement was very unorthodox. We had a very large round coffee table which Rudie had created out of an ~~oak top~~, ^{TOPPED} oak veneer table, an old fashioned table which we had picked up in a second hand store, and he cut it down to make a coffee table. So we sat on the floor and had our meals around the table. ~~And I think of it because it~~ ^{THIS} always engendered a whole lot of fun. We had a fireplace. ~~And~~ ^{our} Saturday evenings were generally spent in that way. Whenever there were meetings like State meetings and people came up for them from Los Angeles we always had one or two of the Los Angeles leading people join us on Saturday nights for dinner, or whatever night was free.

One of our closest friends was Pettis Perry who was one of the black leaders of the party, and he was always there. Also Nemmie Sparks from Los Angeles frequently came. ^{Nemmy + Alice} With ~~them~~ we ^{sparks} had spent two or three vacations in Yosemite.

As might be gathered by now, one of our favorite vacation places was Yosemite. We went down there at least once or twice

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a year. So this characterized our social life to a large extent. Beyond that in summertime we frequently organized picnics outdoors. They usually were in Marin County, like the Samuel Taylor Park, for family and friends, which were also very enjoyable. They got to be kind of a tradition. In those days I didn't know about Angel Island, or it wasn't open for us. Because later, in later years, Angel Island became one of the places we loved to go to.

We participated in many of the affairs that were organized for raising funds for the People's World or for the Party. But that was a duty. You went to those whether you felt like it or not. ~~And~~ [✓] when the season was on for these campaigns we were always very busy doing that.

Once we made a trip to the upper peninsula of Michigan to meet Rudie's parents whom I had never met. ~~And~~ [✓] that was a very interesting experience because he had a very interesting father. He was a Swede in the old country who was at that time in his seventies, who lived to be 91 years old. ~~And~~ [✓] he was still buildin ~~one~~ ^{from} docks for the transportation of iron ore ~~in~~ [✓] the upper peninsula of ~~the~~ iron region for war uses. This was the period of the war, World War II. ~~And that was a very interesting experience.~~ Beyond that we didn't travel outside of the States.

As for cultural activities I am afraid that we didn't do these things together because our interests were very varied when it came to that. I attended the Bach Festival in Carmel some four years in succession with my sister-in-law, Hazel Lambert, and frequently went to symphony concerts and plays, usually with a friend of friends because Rudie was not sufficiently interested. I did go to baseball games with Rudie occasionally because this was his great interest.

One more thing. We had real old-fashioned Christmas celebrations which I think in many minds could create questions of "isn't that a contradiction?" But my family from Germany - Christmas was a very important occasion - ~~the Christmas tree~~ and the fact that ^{the} Christmas ^{tree} as a matter of fact, originated in Germany, ^{as} they never forgot to ^{point out.} say. Rudie's family, which was Swedish, Swedish-American, ^{had a similar attitude toward Christmas.} in Sweden they had the same sort of approach to Christmas. Originally the change of season at Christmas, what they call the Winter Solstice, takes place a couple of days

Originally, the winter solstice, which takes place a couple of days before the 25th of December was the cause for celebration in the old Pagan times. Then, when it became Christmas, many of the things that were done ^{during ancient times} ~~at that time~~ were continued, particularly in the German and the Swedish cultures, ~~so there were many things that were alike~~. For instance, the Swedes had their glug and so did the Germans have something on the same order. Our Christmas dinners, ~~(we just imitated our parents) - but our~~ ^{carried the old traditions} Christmas dinners took on some of these characteristics. Of course there were my sisters two children. For the children we always thought it was a great thing. It was a great thing for us too. It was fun. The gatherings were usually quite nice family gatherings.

Q. Did you exchange presents?

A. Yes. We exchanged presents too, not only within the family but with friends.

Q. Well I had a few questions on this aspect of your life.

What did you discuss with your friends who weren't in the Party? And what did you do with them?

A. Well. The discussions were frequently political interestiggly enough, but political in a different sense, the politics between the Democrats and the Republicans - the whole question of our position compared to theirs. I remember many discussions about the "lesser evil", and many discussions of that character. They were mostly all union people. Sometimes we discussed union policy and tactics. They told their job experiences. But we ^{have just plain fun.} did also ~~develop~~ - Rudie was a ~~very~~ great story teller. He told jokes and stories - (some in Swedish dialect, the American Swedish dialect), which were hilarious to the point where some of our friends recorded them because they were very funny.

^{Several of} One of ^{were} our party friends, Ada and Morrie Smolan, - Morrie was another story teller so that when he was present, between Morrie and Rudie we used to have hours of laughter. ~~We frequently~~ ^{included Ada and Morrie in these gatherings that took place...}

Q. With your non party friends?

A. ^{Ada and Morrie joined many of the evenings with} Yes ^{with} our non party friends. They got to know them.

Q. Did you ever try to recruit them?

A. Yes. As a matter of fact I did recruit one or two, but they didn't stick it out.

Q. Did it matter?

A. ~~It~~ It didn't matter to our friendship. As a matter of fact I

am still very friendly with quite a few of the people. One of my very closest friends, as a matter of fact, was Melvin Anderson's sister who joined the party for a very short time, but found it very incompatible. I still have a friendship with Helen who has a family and two grown sons.

The other things we did - we had very intricate jigsaw puzzles which somebody passed along to us all the way from Washington, D.C. from some wealthy woman who had them made for herself. When she finished them she sent them to her son and daughter who were in the party in Stockton. When they finished them they sent them off to Walter and Hazel, and when they finished them they sent them to us. These were so large that you would have to work on them for weeks and weeks to get them done. They were always there on the table, and people would work on those, *not continuously, of course!*

We played Canasta a lot when that was the rage. We played poker, especially with the non party people. Playing poker seemed to be one of the things that some of the fellows that Rudie liked, liked to do.

Q. Did they play for money?

A. For little amounts - dimes and pennies, quarters and things like that.

Q. The other question I was going to ask you is what you discussed at parties, but that isn't necessary now.

When you had these parties, who arranged for the food?

A. Well, we did it together. Rudie was a marvelous cook. When it came to the question of large groups we had to have large things - turkeys and roasts and things of that sort. This was always Rudie's responsibility. I usually took care of everything else.

We used the fireplace for barbecuing. We made shishkabob and things like that because that was something you could keep going for a long time. We also adopted the system of having smorgasboards with some real Swedish touches to them. I found out the stores in San Francisco where you could get Swedish delicacies. This was enjoyed by everybody, whether they were Swedes or not. But we worked very well together - never even seemed to require much discussion. We would decide on a menu together and then we would just go ahead and do it. He knew that his job was the big ones and I did the rest. He always washed the dishes. He was an ideal husband. He wouldn't let me touch them. (laughter)

Q. With Melvin Anderson and his friends, when they came from

other parts of the world on their ships, did you discuss anything with them, or did they bring things to you?

A. Frequently they brought gifts. I had a pair of book ends, black teak elephant book ends, for a very long time. As a matter of fact, I don't know what happened to them. I had them when I moved, and I am afraid that they were in one of the cases that got lost.

Q. What a shame!

A. ~~And things like,~~ ^{they also brought} what do you call them? those Australian things, boomerangs, and tapa cloths, gifts from the Hawaiian Islands. ^{their work took them} They mostly ~~went out~~ into the Pacific. The stories they came back with were fascinating. I don't know that they told us everything, but they had a lot of tales to tell, ^{including} ~~And~~ many of them, ^{who} because Melvin ^{and} was in the party, ~~and most of them~~ were in the party. ^{one of Melvin's closest friends, his} friend Madigan - do you know him?

Q. Oh yes. He's still around. The funny thing is he won't talk to Bailey any more.

A. I don't know what he has against Bailey. ~~He is one of them~~ ^{I remember.}

This story is a little out of place, but I will tell it to you now. Interestingly, when I was in the underground movement, years later in New York, I had to stay for a few days in someone's home, an apartment, for a special meeting with one of the leading people ~~that I was~~ ^{and} in contact with. ^{all} And while we were having dinner (of course in the underground we ^{all} had assumed names) one day the husband of the couple started to tell a story of an experience he had when he was on the Pacific Coast and in the merchant marine. ~~And~~ He had met a guy who took him to somebody's home in San Francisco. ~~And he said he never~~ (He was a New York kid who was an orphan and who had knocked around an awful lot). ^{HE SAID} He had never been in a private home. He had always been in hotel rooms, flop houses, ^{on ships} and so on. ~~And~~ He said this was the most unusual place. He described ^{our} my apartment. "We sat on the floor Japanese style for our meal." I looked at him and I thought, does he recognize me? It was such an exact description, you know, and I wondered if he was doing it to let me know he recognized me. But I couldn't discern any evidence of the fact. He just got carried away by the story. I don't think he ever connected me with ^{the place} it, but I was highly amused by it.

Q. Was there much drinking at these parties?

A. There was drinking. There was never that much that it got out of hand. Rudie had invented a drink that was known as the Rudie- toot - toot, and this grew out of the fact that we had a huge mint bush in our little garden. So he experimented with the mint and the gin. He made what actually was a mint julep. He made a mint julep, but he used gin. What do you call those tall drinks made of lemon and gin?

Q. Collins.

A. Yes, a collins, but with a touch of a little fruit and and ^{we} gave it that name. Several of them were heavy drinkers. If there weren't too few and we didn't have a big enough gathering and not enough activity going on, sometimes they drank a little too much, but not really. It was never a messy situation.

Q. I don't know whether this question is good or not - no I don't think so..what were the parties to raise money like?

A. People's world parties and so on. I think that too many of them fell into a pattern. There was never enough entertainment. There was an awful lot of in-talking, in jokes, an awful lot of shop talk, and the money raising was the most important thing.

Q. Did you enjoy going to them?

A. No, I didn't. To be very frank I didn't.

Q. Why?

A. Because they were very repetitious. The speeches were repetitious. It was a necessary thing, and to the degree that ^{new} party people ^{who} were brought in, and rank and file people who didn't have a great opportunity to meet others, or only those in their own circles, their own branches and so on, these parties probably played an important social role. They didn't for me because I had to go to too many of them, and I think Rudie felt very much the same way, although Rudie was always engaged in a certain amount of ferreting around, if you understand what I mean. Being responsible for the field of stool pigeons he was always on the lookout. I don't remember any parties that I really enjoyed.

Q. Would people come up and ask you questions?

A. Oh yes. They were business parties too.

Q. When you went to these plays and movies with your friends, what kinds of plays and movies did you go to?

A. I saw Othello, of course, and Inherit and Wind with Melvin

Douglas, ~~in it~~. I went to most of the plays that were put on by the Actors' workshop when they were here. I was particularly fond of any play by Chekov. I went, that's all, even if I had to go alone.

Q. Why were you fond of his plays?

A. I found them extremely realistic, even though they were placed in a period of Russia which was long past. I think he had tremendous human understanding and a great capacity to reflect in the interaction of the characters some of the most fundamental and basic problems that exist among human beings, particularly the man-woman relationship. Even to this day I consider him one of my favorite authors. I could pick up any of his stories or see any of his plays with great pleasure.

Second side

Q. We were talking about Chekov's plays.

A. ^{Yes,} ~~And~~ all of the Workshop Plays, ^{His work reflects the conflicts and disorders of the Russian middle-class, as it was then - Precursor of the later critics of the way of life they had then, which had depth and social meaning.} Another playwright whose work I have always appreciated, and still do, is Berthold Brecht. so that if anything of his came along I went too, and alone if necessary.

The music was the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. For some years I got season tickets for it. But I also went to musicals and I saw West Side Story, Gigi, Finian's Rainbow, Kiss Me Kate, ~~those are some of them.~~

Q. Did you ever feel guilty about enjoying some of these things? Did it interfere with your work in any way?

A. It didn't. I was also very fond of movies and Rudie liked movies too. We went to a great many movies. Movies were for me a relaxation, particularly when we had a great many meetings. Our work required meetings practically every night, and sometimes you have to have a complete change, and I found the movies very, very relaxing. I still like movies very much, but I am much more selective now than I was then. Then it was just anything to be relaxed. I never had a sense of guilt because my work got done. ~~And~~ ^{sure at} if it was a matter of posing attending an event against preparing a report for a convention, ^{or something like that} the report got the preference.

I don't think I ever did anything in that period that sacrificed the time I needed to work. I shouldn't give the impression that I ^{carried on such a lot} did so much of this social activity and all these entertaining things ^{and} and these cultural things which I was interested in ^{and} which I became more and more

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that it interfered with Party work.
~~interested in as I got older.~~

~~When we get to the period of the underground - well that really opened up the floodgates.~~
I can say very frankly I never had a sense of guilt.

Q. No. I just wondered because sometimes people would say, "What's she doing?" you know. There are always critics around.

There is one other thing. What about books. I know you read party publications. But what other things did you have time to read?

A. I did not have enough time to read other books. After the class with Beatrice Kinkead I broadened my reading very much so that I read more than party literature. But it was *of great interest to me, such as books on the history of greece,* literature, ~~but it was literature. It was heavier things. It~~ *Rabelais, Erasmus, Luther, Edith Hamilton on Greece, Studies on ancient* was the history of philosophy, - ~~quite a few of the books which~~ *some* were recommended ~~and which were referred to in~~ *or* the course of ~~the~~ *Kinkead* her course. Rudie liked detective stories, and once in a while I read some of those. I read the Eric Ambler ones. I think everybody did. They were very interesting. I read some science fiction too. But I never really got into reading novels too much. ~~There are now, but~~ I think it is premature in relation to ~~this~~ *since then* interview to indicate some of the reading that I have done, and some of the writers that I particularly am fond of. Frankly, there wasn't really enough time. I ~~would~~ *always* read to ~~put myself to sleep, and that was very odd reading.~~ *something* I read recipes. Some cook books are ~~good~~ *good* literature!

Q. If you had had time, what would you have liked to read?

A. If I can judge by what I have done since, after I had time, I read an awful lot of scientific things to do with ~~the~~ *she* natural sciences, ~~because that is the field I am now interested in; and~~ *books* travel things, biographies, autobiographies, and history. I never read enough history. This is one of the things I still have on the agenda of things I would like to do. For instance I am looking forward to reading Toynbee's last book. ~~This is~~ *which* sort of a summary of his entire library which I don't think I have long enough life left to ~~read.~~ *output an the history of civilization* But there are books like that. I have BRAUDEL'S books ~~which are two volumes~~ *for.* (in) on the Mediterranean which are read very widely ~~now a days by~~ *as it was* people who want to know the Mediterranean in the second ~~century~~ *half of the* 16th century. I think. ~~It is a period, and books that pertain to the destruction~~ *These* of the ecology of the Mediterranean by overuse ~~by man & misuse~~ *by man, treatment of space, ecology, trade, technology*

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rhythms of trade, climate, landscape, all the variety of human history, all of which
~~and it has a certain relationship to what is happening in the~~
all over the world relevance
~~20th century and will continue to happen in the 21st century.~~

Q. I see what you would have read then. Well I think that about covers most of it - in depth! Then we come to World War II.

A. We started last time by more or less dealing with the period of the "phony" war ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{German} Soviet non-aggression pact, which brought us, of course, almost to Pearl Harbor. In fact, I think I should start with that now. I don't want to deal with the war in chronological order as I said before.

Q. No - too many things happened.

A. I will pick out ^{some of the} ~~these~~ things that are of great importance.

~~Here~~ ^{on} the Pacific Coast. ^{When} Pearl Harbor took place I was on a train from Los Angeles to San Francisco, I think on the 8th. Pearl Harbor ^{took place} ~~was~~ on the 7th. ~~And~~ I had to go to L.A. the next day or the same night and when we got close to Santa Barbara everything blacked out. There was pandemonium and panic because there was a rumor that Japanese submarines were approaching the Pacific Coast. ^{the} ~~I think this~~ atmosphere of panics, ^{there were} ~~or~~ blackouts, ^{everywhere} ~~of~~ just complete, ^{absolute} panic is the best ^{was one} ~~word~~ description. I guess ^{it} ~~extended~~ all the way from San Diego up to Puget Sound, and things were done that were really very foolish. The American Legion moved very quickly for the exclusion of the Japanese. So the Japanese exclusion program was instituted so swiftly and violently and blindly that, in retrospect, I don't think there is anybody in the whole United States ~~who~~ wouldn't say that it was an insane act. The West Coast Japanese were proscribed as a class much as Hitler proscribed the Jews in Germany - the same sort of thing. 110,000 Japanese, men, women and children, were moved out of their homes, had all their possessions taken away from them, their businesses, everything, and moved out into camps - virtually concentration camps. There ~~were~~ hoodlums, stimulated I am sure by the American Legionnaire, ⁱⁿ who smashed the homes, the stores ~~and~~ the areas of San Francisco and Los Angeles where the Japanese lived. The atrocities were just terrible and, of course, it included not only Japanese born Japanese, but American born Japanese, the Nisei, the second generation, the ~~majority~~ majority of whom were citizens of the United States, and they were not even granted their rights under the Constitution. They were taken, and that was it.

Q. Did the Party have a policy on this?

A. No. And this was very bad. I was personally very moved and upset because ^{of} my godson, Tom Yoneda (^{she} ~~that~~ is Elaine and Karl Yoneda's son) - of course they were sent out, and Elaine is not Japanese. She is Jewish-American, but she went with her family, and Tommy was just a child. They were sent to Manzanar. Through their letters which we circulated widely we knew exactly what was going on there. It was really, really a disgrace.

Q. Why didn't the party take a position on this?

A. The party knew that the exclusion of the Japanese was an extreme act that grew out of the exaggeration of the military regarding the danger of the Japanese to the Pacific Coast. It was an exaggeration because there wasn't a single incident of sabotage, there wasn't a single incident at all that should warrant this, not even on the Hawaiian Islands where Pearl Harbor took place, ^{and where thousands of Japanese live.} The party reacted by not reacting at all, though it knew this, ^{At} least not publicly. Among the party members there was a lot of discussion, and much of the discussion centered around how terrible it was that the Yonedas had to go, and here was this child - or others who were Japanese party members who had to go, and ^{there was} a sort of aura of compassion, but there was not the aura of criticism there should have been, and certainly not publicly. To the best of my knowledge this very crass oversight on the part of the party, ~~the mistake,~~ ^{this gross} the error of omission, was never corrected. The whole program finally collapsed in 1944 when the Supreme Court declared the internment, ~~is it internment?~~ ^{declared it unconstitutional.} I don't know what year that was, but I think it must have been near the end of the war, or in 1944.

Q. What did you personally think about this?

A. I was very upset and very critical, and Oleta was very critical. We discussed it between ourselves, and I think Oleta even raised it at one meeting, and the approach was sort of - let's not do anything that will rock the boat.

Now Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war, and now we were in alliance with England and the Soviet Union. That alliance was, of course, the big factor, and it seemed to the party in general, and I think this not rocking the boat by coming up with something like criticism of this Japanese exclusion act was motivated by, largely by the feeling that now

we are part of it. Now we are going to be able to make a real contribution. ~~And~~ ^I it has to be said that to the great credit of the people who were evacuated, ~~and~~ ^(Karl Yoneda is an example) that all the time they were there they never ^{capitulated to the temptation of only criticizing} said anything against this policy ^{with} to their fellow Japanese. They rather made clear the importance of the defeat of Fascism, ^{Germany, Britain and Japan,} and the defeat of Japan, and many of them, as soon as they ^{had a chance,} as soon as they were released, ^{would} join the army, and served as Karl did. I think Elaine has to be given a great deal of credit too for her role, for the fact that she went ^{with her family to Manzanar}, and for her role which was a very positive one, to the best of my knowledge and from the remembrances of the letters she wrote.

Q. Did you know any Japanese people besides Tom and ^{the Yonedas} ~~Elaine~~?

A. Yes, but I don't remember their names. There were quite a number of them as a matter of fact.

Q. Did you ever visit Manzanar?

A. No.

Q. Did you write letters to them?

A. Yes we corresponded, but we never visited, partially because we were all too busy, up to our necks, and any visits anywhere were considered too luxurious a thing to do timewise.

Q. I was just think^{ing} of the time when you were young and the teacher kept you standing because you were German. Did you ever think of that?

A. Yes. Yes. It is reminiscent you know, very reminiscent. I have since read quite a lot of things on the war and on that period, and there isn't a military man who was involved in that period who doesn't say today that this ^{war} ~~is~~ one of the biggest ~~blows~~, a permanent blot on the American democratic system. This is especially true of this man, I can't remember his name, we had better forget about him.

Q. Let's see - do you want to say anything else about the Japanese.

A. No. I think that's all.

Q. Let's see, did the communist party, we discussed its policy now, that everybody was very happy. What did you personally feel about the war? How did it affect you personally?

A. Well, I think everybody, and this included Rudie and me - we

were completely absorbed with the war. From then on it was a just war. Now we could envision the defeat of fascism though ^{the Alliance won} ~~we were~~ far from having the military situation that would bring about the defeat. ^{in hand.} One of the biggest questions was the question of the second front. There was one point where the feeling spread that Hitler had really made two fronts for himself, both East and West, and to really defeat him would be to attack him from the West, attack him ~~from France~~, through France. ^{Then} ~~And~~ France was occupied by the German armies, so there was a great deal of military discussion about what should be done. ^{of the campaign} The initiation for the opening of the second front in the United States came from the communist party. The degree to which this initiation may have emanated from Russia I ~~could~~ not say, because it ^{very well} may have been. Nevertheless it was a necessity to win the war. It was so clearly a necessity to win the war that ^{the campaign received} ~~it was~~ great ^{response} from everyone. We carried on very extensive activities among all circles and resolutions were passed by all kinds of organizations, trade unions and other organizations, calling for a second front, directed mainly to the government, to Roosevelt. It evolved that Eisenhower was in favor of it. ~~So that~~ ^The campaign for the opening of the second front ~~I think~~ absorbed us for a ^{long time} number of years. It was ^{our} ~~the~~ main activity. At this stage I was a member of the national committee. I had been a member of the national committee now for several years and attended all the national committee meetings during this time. ~~Such~~ ^{Many} of the developments during this time are very fresh in my mind. ~~And~~ ^This is the period ~~when~~ which brought to life what I refer to as the second major crisis for the CP USA during the war. ^{The problem revolved} ~~And it had to do around~~ the question of finally getting an agreement ^{among the participants in the Grand Alliance} for opening up the second front. This ^{involved} ~~was~~ the meeting that was held between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin in November of 1943 in Teheran. They made an agreement which was referred to as the Teheran Agreement. ~~And~~ ^The main things they agreed to there were three things. First of all some general military agreements with regard to the military aspects of the war. Most important they agreed to the opening of the second front. And ~~they~~ discussed possible post-war agreements or arrangements and settlements after the victory without ^{arriving at} any final conclusions. This conference was carried on with great amity and friendliness and with great mutual confidence which spread all over the world.

Lam: It was on the basis of this agreement and the spirit of the conference Earl Browder developed his theory that the war time collaboration between the powers in the Grand Alliance would extend into the post war period. On the basis of this analysis, he proposed re-enforcing this "probability" with class harmony on the home front. Well, this thesis of his was developed. I can remember that there were difficulties and problems in getting this analysis across to many. A pamphlet containing Browder's report was issued which was sold by the thousands, and a few were sent to some of our comrades who were fighting at the front. I remember Jack Lucid's story. He managed to get a copy of this pamphlet when he was in the front lines, facing the enemy. Yet he carried the pamphlet with him to read it. He would read a page and as he finished reading a page he would tear it out and burn it up, going on to the next page. Unusual circumstances in which to read Browder's report! More, unusual circumstances in which to try to understand it - or agree with it!

Q. OK - about Jack Lucid burning up the pamphlet?

A. Yes. He would burn the book up ^{to} read it page by page. He couldn't grasp it at all as you can well imagine. Here he was. I think he was in Italy or in Southern France when this happened. Many of the men, when they came back, ^{stated they} didn't understand ^{the premise} it at all. ^{new} It was such a reversal of our position. What happened then - In keeping with this whole ^{new} political perspective ^{which} ~~it~~ got to be known as the Teheran Policy. Browder recommended the transformation of the Communist Party of the United States into the Communist Political Association, which meant, in essence, the abandonment of the political party form, diminishing its independent electoral role, diminishing its advocacy of socialism, or at least making the projection of socialism something that would take place in an amorphous way far into the future. The leadership and the membership went along with this, but there were some members who had extremely strong objections to this ^{new} party line.

Q. Were you one of them?

A. I was not one of them. I was a member of the National Committee that adopted the line. Many had misgivings that they were unable to express, and generally went along with it. But I think the main factor for the lack of ~~xxxxxxxx~~ critical evaluation of this projected policy was the great euphoria created by ^{the} prospect of a victory in the war, and this was the outstanding fact in the Teheran agreement, ~~in the Teheran meeting~~ between the three powers, and in Browder's reaction to it. And thus ~~there came~~ this policy, ^{came about}.

Within a very short time there was a sharp condemnation of this program by Jacques Duclos, who was a leader of the French Party, as being an abandonment of the principles of Marxism-Leninism & it was a revision of Marxism. ~~And we~~ we have to remember that the Communist International was dissolved a few years earlier so that if there was any criticism from the international communist movement of any party it would have to come from somebody else, and certainly it couldn't come from Russia, in view of the war itself. So it came in this way, from Duclos. ~~And of course it was already almost the end of the war, very close to the end of the war.~~ But this voice from the world communist movement had a great impact on we Americans and it forced a total re evaluation of our policy and an awful

lot of soul searching by the thousands who compliantly agreed with the Browder line. This I was very much involved in. First of all because as a member of the national committee I first agreed to it. Though one thing came out - when the policy was first presented by Browder to the national board prior to the national committee meeting it was almost exclusively his own thinking. Usually ^{the reports were based on collective agreement} it was a collective report. This time it was almost exclusively ^{Browder's} his own thinking, and obviously ^{based on} a very immediate reaction to the Teheran conference. So, you know, ~~the fact that~~ when it came before the national committee there was a great sense of surprise, but there was also a feeling that this was it. We are going to win the war. Inevitably, there is going to be a continuation of this great friendship and collaboration between these nations.

Q. You mentioned earlier that Browder brought forth the Americanization of the party. Was this part of that thinking. Did that come into it in any way?

A. I think that was part of the thinking. I don't recall if it was mentioned specifically in the report itself. But certainly it was there, because for some years there had been the effort to Americanize the party's position. It seemed like a golden opportunity of course. The Teheran Policy, as it was referred to, was in fact based on a fantasy - a utopian expectation of peace between the military-industrial establishment and the common people, the working class. As you can imagine this whole thing left the party in a very shaken and weakened position and revealed to all of us ~~the~~ very deep seated problems, mainly in the absence of a seasoned leadership capable of developing a programmatic and strategic approach, ^{which} was really rooted in the American reality.

I mean that was certainly there. For instance, I think there was ^{the} an additional fact that the meaning of a wartime measure was distorted into becoming ^{the} a basis for a new tactic, and ^{being} carried away by ^{it} - the only word you can use is euphoria, which is hardly scientific. ~~With this, of course,~~ then after that whole process of soul searching and everything went on, the upshot was that Browder was removed as the general secretary ^{by} of the party in 1945 and he was finally expelled from the party for revision of Marxism, and the Communist Party of the United States was reconstituted. The general consensus was Browder's expulsion didn't mean that he ~~only~~ ^{alone} was responsible for ^{the revision of Marxism} it. He was mainly responsible, but the whole party had to accept responsibility. The leadership had to because

they had gone along with it. So a decision was made to reorganize the leadership from top to bottom, to the degree that it was possible, down the line to strengthen the composition of the leadership with working class people who had ties with the working class, ~~better~~^{genuine} ties with the working class, and who could begin to help build the party in a way that it would become an American party with greater ~~meaning~~^{viability}. Unfortunately this reorganization of leadership sometimes took the form of a reshuffling of the same people. Some people were not re-elected to positions of leadership, some were removed, some were relieved of their responsibility, some were shifted to other areas or states or districts, and some were replaced ~~from~~^{by Party members} sources drawn from non party fields of work like trade unions or industrial or so on. ~~The party people of course would be drawn in from these things.~~ I was replaced as org. secretary in California (have to hasten to say this) not because I bore a greater responsibility for the Teheran policy than others, but to make it possible to promote to this position of org. secretary a person with ~~more~~^{closer} ties to the working class and more direct trade union experience, both of which I lacked. So Loretta Starvus was chosen to fill this job. Loretta is a woman with a vast experience in trade unions since childhood, in textile, electrical and so on. So that happened in my case. This brought me to the point where for the first time in many years I did not hold a full time position in the party, although I maintained activity in the daily work of the party.

I got a secretarial job ~~in~~^{with} a construction ~~industry~~^{company} that was building houses in the Sunset district for veterans of WW II. ~~Only veterans could buy these houses. They were terribly poorly constructed, but that is what I was doing.~~

Q. Let's stop here and go back a bit, because I have a few questions I want to ask. I don't want you to get too far ahead. In the first place, we missed your being elected to the national committee. How did it happen?

A. I mentioned at one point, I was co-opted.

Q. Oh, I thought you were elected after that.

A. The first time I was co-opted together with two other women. Then the following national committee meeting, which I think took place in 1940, I was elected. So already, by the time 1943 1944 came around I had been at three or four national committee meetings.

Q. During the war all these women were going into shipyards and other work. Did you ever feel differently. Did you ever feel the work in the party was more important, or did you ever feel you wanted to go into war industry?

A. I thought about it, but I ^{wasn't ready to} ~~didn't even~~ make ^{such} a decision. I thought about it, especially when my aunt ~~xxxx~~ ^{to work in the shipyards,} went. I was so pleased with her action. It just seemed terrific. She was 52 years old and I thought that was just a great thing. Then, of course I got to know other people who had gone in to war work. Most of them were non party ^{people} ~~members~~. Some of our party women did go to work there, but I didn't have the desire to do that, I think mainly because ^{at the time} I was up to my ears in this second front thing. I had a lot of responsibility on that for gathering the material for use by the party organization.

Q. That was my next question - one of my next questions.

A. Yes. I ^{prepared study} ~~made~~ outlines, ^{which required much research} I ~~made~~ studies of it, and I even read books about war, ~~war strategy and everything~~ ^{and tactics}, including "On War" by Karl von Clausewitz.

Q. How was this utilized?

A. It was utilized in branches and club discussions. It was utilized in meetings by speakers and so on.

Q. On a national, or just a local scale?

A. In California, but one ^{piece of material} ~~of them~~ was picked up and used nationally, ~~one of the outlines~~ ^{from}. Many of the leading people making reports to the county organizations and sections used this material.

Q. Did you enjoy doing this?

A. I enjoyed doing it. It was a research job and I like ^{doing} ~~research work too~~, though the line and the policy was the ~~Teheran policy~~.

Q. Did you meet many women in the Party who were doing war work?

A. There were some. I don't remember their names now, but there were some who enjoyed it because it was great. I know my aunt enjoyed it. She was an expeditor, which meant that she had to mark these great chunks of material with some kind of coded markings so that the men who ^{needed precise pieces} ~~transported them~~ would take ^{transported directly to the} ~~them to the right place and the right~~ part of the ship where it was ^{to be used} ~~needed~~. She had a ^{lot} ~~great deal~~ of relationship with the draftsmen, the guys who planned the thing and who were directing the construction. ~~And~~ They would give her the lists of ~~things~~ ^{parts}.

that were needed and she would go around and ^{code} mark the material.

She had a very wonderful relationship with her fellow workers, ^{all}

~~the men.~~ It was surprising. There was no - She used to enjoy

it. She just enjoyed going to work. ^{In her case, there were no}

Q. She had never worked before?

A. Not in that kind of work. She was a glove maker. <sup>Cynical remarks of male
Chauvinist teasing, just good
fellowship with lots of mutual
respect.</sup>

Q. Oh, for goodness sake.

A. She had her own little glove making ^{shop} ~~hand~~ - you know in the French-Belgian style.

Q. Is she still alive.

A. Yes. She is 83 years old ^{now} and she is in an old people's home in Oakland.

Q. Women were coming to you with their problems because you were the org. secretary. Did any of them come to you during the war? Were their problems any different?

A. No, I don't think so. One of the big things that is striking is that while they got a lot of teasing on the job from men workers they got respect. We never got any feedback about crude things, or obscene things. There was a lot of good natured teasing that went on. I think this was a healthy sign.

Q. I was wondering about their role in the unions because there were some unions that wouldn't take them in, and I wondered if this was ever brought up.

A. I don't recall that it was. I should say there was one other thing that was kind of interesting. When one of these ships was completed and ready for launching, all of the workers who worked on it were invited to the launching, which showed a good attitude toward the workers. There was a spirit of cooperation.

One of the interesting little side-lights ^{was when} ~~is that~~ the ship my aunt worked on, ^{was to be launched} she was so excited her whole family came, her son, her daughter, her grandchildren, and my mother went.

The ship was named the ^{SS.} Jack London, which just about made the ^{day} family - they were so pleased with that because ^{London} ~~he~~ was another one of the ~~heroes~~ ^{own family's heroes.} of the family. ^{for the}

Q. We went through this Duclos thing a little too fast too. How did you react to this? Was it a shock to you?

A. Yes. At first I thought he had an awful nerve. I think a lot of people did. For some time I kept defending our policy.

It seemed to have validity for the United States. In my mind I tried to ^{rationalize by noting the} ~~differentiate that - the difference~~ between France and the United States. However very soon it became clear that we had really gone overboard and -

Q. There is sort of an innocence about that.

A. Yes. And there then was criticism and self criticism that also went overboard. I mean people began to berate themselves to such an extent that it was kind of ridiculous.

Q. How did you react? Do you remember?

A. Well slowly. As I said, slowly. At first I didn't accept it. Then I realized that ~~it was right~~, Duclos was right. I tried very hard to settle in my own mind why and how this had happened to us. I don't think I have the full answers even now why it happened except to ^a ~~the~~ degree - I would have to say that we were in general a party that was not a seasoned Marxist ^{Party} (in the sense of Marxism-Leninism as thought of in those days) ~~this is a changing thing now you know.~~ We didn't have a seasoned and long history of politics - American ^{Socialist} politics, urban working class politics. Our alliance with the Soviet Union and our ^{tendency of defense of} ~~putting the Soviet union first, which was the mistake we~~ ~~made with the non aggression pact,~~ seemed to me to play a role in this thing with the Teheran agreement. We put ourselves in the position of being the American representatives of the Soviet Union in this instance. Now some of this I can say in retrospect. I ~~don't know and~~ can't remember how clearly I thought this through at the time. I think what was happening to me happened to a great many people in different degrees. Some had different explanations and maybe more profound explanations, but I was very disturbed, and I think everybody was. I was disturbed because I had been enthusiastic about the line - partially because we won the second front, we were going to win the war, so I was overwhelmed by the fact that I ² had been carried away. ~~I had a feeling of self criticism.~~ However I didn't feel, and I think we saved a lot of the party because we didn't capitulate to ~~it~~ ^{the} so completely. ^{On the contrary, we fought for the Party's} ~~that we gave it up.~~ We fought for its re-establishment for its strengthening and for ~~a while~~ ^{for a while and} succeeded to a degree, ~~until we made other mistakes.~~

criticism
^

Q. How did the party change during that period then?

Did it have fairly new leadership?

A. Not even fairly. It was re-shuffled. It was re organized. ^{utilizing many of the same functionaries in other ways.}

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For example,

As general secretary of the CPUSA

Into the national center came Eugene Dennis. We had William Schneiderman all the way through as our district organizer,

both before Tolson and after.

While I ~~place the question of~~ *have already explained* how my replacement took place,

there were several people who I think were unfairly handled.

One of them was Steve Nelson, *former officer in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade,* who was a very popular leader in ~~the state~~ *California.*

He was taken out of California and sent to

Pittsburgh. Now whether that strengthened Pittsburgh or

strengthened California is a question. I wouldn't be able to

answer that. I ~~think~~ *don't believe* that Steve himself, ~~he didn't want~~ *wanted* to leave California. He felt that in a way it was putting *unfair*

responsibility on him, or as he *once* said making a "sacrificial lamb" out of him.

Q. Did you think they were making a "sacrificial lamb" out of you. ?

Second side

A. I felt that way ~~mostly because~~ *to a degree* not that I had any objection to changes that had to be made. We had to take

steps to strengthen the party. I felt there ~~could~~ have been just as easily a change made in the district organizership.

I ~~thought~~ *would have been acceptable as* why not bring Steve Nelson ~~in as~~ *an* organizer, or something like that. I felt that I was being singled out

though I know I didn't have the trade union experiences that were necessary, and many experiences of this kind. But I also

knew that California had the strongest organization in the party, including New York; that we had grown the most; that

we had many innovations which strengthened the parties *ties* with non party masses of people. We had our own newspaper and

so on, and I think that the whole organization played a role in this. ~~And~~ *this growth* I think ~~it~~ had its roots even further back in

things that were referred to by Carey McWilliams, you know *in his "California - the Great Exception"* the sort of indigineous radicalism that shows itself in ~~big~~ *critical*

periods in California from time to time, and which by the way came up again, I *believe* think when the Independent Progressive Party

was formed. ~~The recognition of this should have been spread to everybody in the leadership. I wasn't the only one responsible~~

~~by any means.~~ My work as org. secretary fit into the pattern of strengthening the party. So I ~~would~~ not have used the phrase

"sacrificial lamb" at the time, but I did feel very badly because it had not been discussed with me. I thought this showed a lack

of confidence and a lack of respect. *before presentation to the state Board which made the decision.*

Q. Was all this re shuffling done without the leadership

MEMBER

knowing about it. Was it discussed with them?² Was there a convention or anything?

A. There ~~was~~ a convention, but the recommendations were made as usual, as always in the past, in a very beaurocratic way - "this is the recommendation - you can make nominations if you ^{wish} ~~want~~" - but, you know, this was it. This was one of the weaknesses of the party I think all the way through - this sort of self-perpetuation of leadership - of a leading body deciding who remains and who doesn't. It is usually the district organizer or the top person who, in his own mind, evolved ^{the proposals} ~~then~~ in the board there would be some exchange and there would be some adaptations. But whatever the board decided would be presented to the convention and almost universally accepted.

Q. During the war years particularly you were the organizational secretary in charge of membership. Did the party grow during the war period, or not?

A. We ~~didn't~~. We lost a lot of members when the non-aggression pact was signed, ~~and our crazy position then because we were -~~ ~~as I explained last time - our position -~~ ^{and some during the Scheran period.}

Q. Although you never got them all back, did you get any new members during that period?

A. There were new members, ^{in some areas, many new members} but our drives for new members tapered somewhat. ~~We had campaigns for new members,~~ ^{we undertaken} but ~~they~~ ^{goals as} we never quite reached the ~~height~~ ^{that} we had before.

Q. Were there as many men as women in the party during that period? What was the relationship - the difference in numbers?

A. In 1943, which would be approximately this period, the party had some 83,000 members in contrast to 100,000 at the end of the 30's - 40% were industrial workers - 14% were black - 46% were women - and 25% were professionals and white collar workers.

Q. You are getting that from a pamphlet, aren't you?

A. Yes. This is quoted from a pamphlet by Peggy Dennis, entitled On Learning From History. She says further that a year later 24,000 more joined, 30% of them black. ^{The growth came} ~~that was~~ after the party had been re-established, ^{and an all-out effort was made to recruit new members.}

Q. I was just wondering if during the war there were more women in the party, particularly because men had gone off to war.

A. It could be. My memory is not very clear - ^{I believe there} ~~was that there~~ ^{was a smaller} ~~was a less~~ percentage of women in the earlier years.

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Q. Did this reflect itself in the leadership in any way during that period?

A. Yes I think so. Many more women were brought into the leadership in all of the districts. Dorothy Healey became a District Organizer in Southern California when the State became two districts. She is out of the party, ^{now} but she is still one of the leading ^M marxist figures in the country among women.

Q. Let us get back to this. You felt hurt. How did you feel about going out and getting a job after all that time?

A. It didn't bother me very much. In fact it was kind of a relief. It was a change of pace. It really didn't bother me. *It was a minor challenge.*

Q. How did you get the job?

A. Through an agency. Of course the fact that I had just been a party functionary didn't come into the picture. ^{had} I maintained my shorthand, and, of course, I did a lot of typing in the party, but I maintained my shorthand because I used to take notes in shorthand. *Shorthand and typing are tools* That's almost like knowing a language. It comes back to you. ~~So that was easy enough.~~

Q. How long did you stay on the job?

A. I don't remember that. I think it was a year or a year and a half.

Q. Did you make any new friends during that period outside of the party?

A. No. Our friends were still mainly in the party.

Q. Did you stay in the party yourself?

A. Oh yes.

Q. What role did you play?

A. I did all kinds of ^{miscellaneous} strange things. I wrote a pamphlet for new members. ^{the} San Francisco County ^{Chairman, Delta Yates} asked me to do that. ~~Delta, I think, asked me to do it.~~ ^{the} So I wrote this little pamphlet for new members on what to expect when they joined the party. ~~It~~ was very well received as a matter of fact. It was illustrated by Pele. I taught some new members classes. I did things that were org. department ^{activities} things, sometimes for ^{SF} the county, (mainly for the county) because the state was not really involving me in these things, which was wise, because they would be my ways of doing things and it would not necessarily make it very much easier for Loretta who was having a tough time getting used

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to the way the party functioned. She'll tell you her story.

Q. I want to ask another question. I didn't ask this before, and this is one of the problems about my knowing your background, you did have a good friend in Oleta, and I knew this. You were both very close. I think I should ask you this now. What was your relationship with Oleta? She was in quotes your best girl friend.

A. This was not always true because she was a very cool person, very distant in a way, and very difficult to get really intimately friendly with. Many people complained about that.

..that she was too hard to get to know. I think it grew out of a certain shyness. ^{on her part.} This sounds funny because she was not a shy person. ^{in her leadership role.} But it grew out of a certain shyness in relation to

other ^{individuals} people. Our friendship sort of grew gradually because we had a lot to do with each other politically. We found ourselves of the same viewpoint so many times it was incredible. She

had a quality of ^{understanding} thinking and a quality of mind that put her in a separate category. I think that if her health had held up she could have done anything at all she wanted to. She was a really brilliant woman. This compatibility that we had occasionally on ^{issues that arose} ~~things that came up~~, political ^{questions} things and so on, I think made for a great mutual respect. I respected her very much. We

gradually got to the point where we saw each other a lot because she lived right out here not far from ^{our place} ~~us~~ during the war. We began to exchange christmas gifts. We were real close, recognized each other's birthdays, things of this sort, and much later we

went on vacations together. We went on vacations ^{to} ~~in~~ Yosemite ^{and not Lassen} together. She and I made a walking trip of some seventy miles in the ^{High Sierra} ~~upper areas~~ together after we got out of the party. She wasn't a regular hiker, but did remarkably well. I think the quality of our friendship was so special because of the fact that there was mutual respect, and mutual respect for each other's political views, but also mutual respect for each other's needs. If one didn't feel well, you recognized it, and things of that sort. We had many exchanges about problems of the party, which were sort of extra curricular, outside of the regular channels.

..though I must say they didn't necessarily influence what we did. We were both very independent in expressing our views, and we didn't always agree. But we did have this sort of - particularly when it came to the question of the united front, of tactics with

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non party people, of the Americanization of the organization. I had done this work on American traditions and she picked it up very quickly, and vice versa. She was very innovative ^{WE} when it came to ^{policy questions} ~~certain things~~ that where you ^{might} ~~would~~ expect someone else in the ^{leadership to take the initiative} ~~organization~~ to be more critical and more outspoken, ^{than others.} ~~She was very innovative.~~ ^{creating on certain occasions, setting us thinking in new ways,} One of the outstanding examples is given by Richmond in his book in the evaluation of Oleta during the Smith Act case, which doesn't fit in here right now, but I am mentioning it because it is something which should be brought to the fore. I think Richmond did a beautiful job in evaluating Oleta's role because it was Oleta and Dorothy who recommended the policy ^{followed} in the Smith Act case in California, which was adopted as the guiding policy and which was different from ^{national line.} ~~the center, and which won their case.~~ ^{I believe the California Smith Act case was won largely because of this.}

Q. You never mentioned - I never asked you - whether you had any close women friends. Was Oleta the only close woman friend you ever had outside of your--

A. Well. You could count Loretta now.

Q. I mean before then - in your younger years.

A. No, except for Helen Anderson, who was non party, and who was fun, you know. I had lots of women friends among the party people. I liked a lot of women and we got along very nicely. Elaine Yoneda and I were very friendly for a long time.

Q. That's another question I wanted to ask you.

How happen you became the godmother?

A. Which is a contradiction - just like Christmas. ^{We} ~~You~~ are not Christians. I don't know why Elaine and Karl decided that Tom had to have a godmother. ~~I haven't the remotest idea how that arose.~~ I got out of jail and shortly afterwards Olsen released Mooney, and Tom ^{Yoneda} was named after Tom Mooney and Olsen. Tom's middle name is Culbert, in honor of that event. And I think that Elaine wanted to honor him in some way ^{involving one} ~~to some one~~ of the women that were close and whom she knew. Our friendship was very close at that time, so they decided that I should be the godmother. I fulfilled ^{my understanding of} that position until he became a young adult. ~~I paid attention to him.~~ I think our friendship went sour, if I can use that phrase, when I left the party.

Q. Well we are right back now to your going to work in the Sunset District for -

A. That lasted for a short time. ~~I think I want to~~

Lam: I do want to say that one of the last acts during the war is one that gave us one of the biggest shocks of all. We were vacationing, and this is one of the vacations that I know Oleta was with us. We were in Yosemite Valley and enjoying all those magnificent peaks, and forests, and waterfalls, and everything, when we heard the news of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We had a sense of unbelievable horror when we heard this because we knew the war was coming to an end. We had for weeks already been discussing the fact that there was on Churchill's part, particularly Churchill's part, and Truman's as well (Roosevelt had died and Truman was now President) a determination to receive unconditional surrender by Germany, Italy and Japan. In order to do this they now turned to the use of the most extreme instrument of destruction. They had those artificially created firestorms and the saturation bombing, the flame throwers and the B-29s, plus the saturation bombing of Dresden. I read a book about that by a British army officer. In fact more people were killed in Dresden than were killed in Hiroshima.

Then came the use of the atomic bomb. Since we were aware of the fact that the war was coming to an end, obviously the use of these bombs were militarily useless. After the history of the war was written many of the military men expressed similar views - that the use of the bomb was unnecessary. Here we had heard something so horrible, and in contrast to where we were, you can't imagine. We had an all-embracing sense of futility. We experienced a sense of horror. We asked ourselves "when will it end? What other monstrous thing can still happen?" Of course we know now that we are going to live with atomic missiles for a very, very long time, or die with them en masse. The realization of the impact and potential of these bombs was a horrible moment for us, personally, as it surely was for millions of others.

Ken: What did you do about it? Did the party reflect your thinking?

Lam: Yes, to an extent, but didn't do anything.

Ken: Did you do anything about it within the party structure?

Lam: We almost gave up our vacation, but then that seemed useless. There were discussions of course, and the discussions came very quickly. John Hersey's book received very wide distribution. Truman defended his action so strongly immediately. There were bigger problems which overshadowed any specific action on the atomic bomb. Since then, of course, a million actions by people everywhere developed because the threat of atomic war hangs over the world all the time.

Ken: You know, Louise, this is just about the end of the tape, and the atomic bomb is a terrifying end. But I think we have gone long enough. You are losing your voice, and we can discuss what we are going to do next time.

Q. What we decided last time, I think, was that we would answer some of the questions that would come up after I had read the transcript. There were a few questions that we can get to now. You were discussing your reading. I discussed some of this with Sue, and she wanted to know how much influence the party had in determining people's cultural tastes, and did people feel that progressive authors should be read, and progressive entertainment the only thing you could go to?

A. Well, the party's influence insofar as what you read was extremely heavy on Marxist literature to the exclusion of any encouragement of reading. You could read other things of course. It was up to the individual. You could read anything you wanted to. But ^{the} party and its organizations and in the internal party life, the books of ~~the~~ marxist writers and of ~~the~~ communist writers from all over the world ~~were what they called the classics which~~ ^{mainly} ~~were~~ ^{the} books written by ^{marx} Engels, Lenin and Stalin, ~~these~~ were the ones which were the most heavily pushed within the organization for reading. There were ~~many~~ ^{when} times a leading person might mention an author's book which was ~~pure~~ "trash" and ~~nobody should read it.~~ ^{one should not waste the time} ~~to read it.~~ I can't remember any example ^{at this moment} of it exactly. When it came to some ~~writers~~ ^{it} around the movement who wrote books, ~~either~~ novels, ~~or~~ historical analysis, ~~or~~ biographies, ~~and~~ ^{or} books on history, which the party approved because of ~~either~~ their liberal and progressive approach and content, or which they approved of because the author had attempted to reflect marxist thinking in the book, ~~Then~~ such books were encouraged. There are two opposite examples I can give, two aspects of this question. One are the books of Howard Fast, who was a member of the party for a long period of time, and who wrote his books under the influence of ~~a marxist~~ ^{the Party's} effort towards Americanization. ~~This is what turned him to writing the novels about American history.~~ There was a novel about the civil war. There was a novel about George Washington, and more. I don't remember all of them. Of course we pushed them. Everybody read them. You just had that social compulsion..everybody's reading it, and you are going to read it too. So he was the favorite author as far as novels were concerned and he was highly honored at various affairs and functions which were backed by the communist movement, particularly in New York.

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Ernest Hemmingway's book on Spain was an example of a different kind. It was greeted very much by the members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and outstandingly so by Steve Nelson, whose review ~~which was written together with someone else~~, appeared in the People's World. (Al Richmond mentions this in his book.) It was a positive review - a welcoming of the fact that such a book was in existence. Of course, as you know, it was a novel. Almost immediately there came a criticism of the book, first of all from France because the book was critical of the ^{French} Central Committee representative ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ Spain, who it turned out, ironically, was a provocateur; ~~and~~ this came out later. But at the time he was still in a seat of power in the ^{French} party. ~~And~~ the criticism of the book then gradually spread and ~~some of~~ the people in the central committee and the educational department, ~~among~~ those who were working on cultural questions, attacked the ~~book~~ Steve Nelson review, and so the People's World had to refute the first review and the characterization of the book came out as having been a travesty on the true story of the Spanish Civil War and what the role of the American Brigade was in that war.

Q. I know you didn't follow the party line on this, and you were a national committee member. Do you think that many people just accepted this as one part of their life and went on and did what they damn well pleased otherwise?

A. I think that is true to a very large extent. I was among those who thought the Hemingway book was a good one. ~~I never, you know,~~ to me it was kind of a tempest in a tea pot.

But my reading, especially after the class with Beatrice Kinhead, became very diverse. And even later when I was in the underground assignment, it became even more diverse. ~~And~~ This has happened on an even wider scale since I am out of the party.

It has to be said that there was not really a heavy current of cultural interest in the party in the sense of theatre, motion pictures, literature, art, or so on. There were segments of the party membership who went in for one or another of these fields with great interest. I know that Nimmie Sparks, who was one of the leading people in the party, an organizer in Los Angeles for a long time, and a member of the national committee, ~~he~~ was an avid reader of anything that had to do with the Grecian period, with ^{ancient} Greece, right up to the time of his death. He read ~~KAZANTZAKIS~~ ^{KAZANTZAKIS} who was this great Greek writer who had, at

one point, been very close to the marxists, had been in the Soviet Union, but who also professed Bhuddism. Shakespeare and Joseph Conrad were two of the ^{authors} ~~areas~~, a lot of people read. ~~And I think some of the~~ Playwrights like Lillian Hellman, Berthold Brecht, Sean O'Casey, and the poets like Pablo Neruda, and ~~there is~~ a Turkish poet whose name I don't recall, ^{were much appreciated. They} ~~these~~ were all people who at one point or another had ~~had, or still had~~, contact with the communist ^{and progressive} movement, but whose works also had great appeal in very wide circles, and who were regarded as great writers. Anyone who was interested in literature at all would read these books. For instance, I read the five volumes of Sean O'Casey's autobiography and thought it a great piece of work. ~~And~~ ^{is great,} the poetry of Pablo Neruda, in fact all of his poetry some of which was written before he became a communist, and some which was highly influenced by the ~~(he was in the Spanish Civil War)~~ ^{in which he played a role.} ~~he was highly influenced by that.~~ Pablo Neruda is considered something of a surrealist poet because he used ~~such~~ a great deal of symbolism in his poetry. He ~~even~~ wrote one poem which had great influence in the United States, and that was about Abraham Lincoln. He ~~even~~ wrote one about Joaquin Murietta, "Our bandit, our Chilean bandit," in California." Dorxis Lessing, who was also connected with the communist party for a long period of time, ~~openly so,~~ ^{wrote many} ~~her~~ ^{books which were widely} literature was adopted and read. One of the present leaders in the women's liberation movement, ^{EVE} ~~is it E.~~ Merriam, wrote quite a few books under the influence of the party and her books were widely read. The books of Anna Louise Strong and ~~the other lady,~~ Agnes Smedley, who was in China - these kind of books, they were encouraged, of course. No one was directly discouraged from reading anything they wanted to, but you had this sort of narrow viewpoint, so you stayed away from certain ^{writers} ~~people like~~ I ^{for instance} ~~stayed~~ ^{never read anything by} ~~away from~~ Tynbee, which I am sorry for now and I think I am going to have to make it up in some way. We read George Bernard Shaw's books, especially the book he wrote for women on socialism, which had a lot of ~~stuff~~ in it that was not agreed with at all by ~~the~~ communists, but we read it because of its title and its subject matter. Books by Ruth Benedict ~~they were not discouraged. We~~ ^{and} ~~read them.~~ ^{were read, too.} Margaret Mead, There is one auther we have here now out at State College. What is her name?

A. Kay Boyle.

A. Yes. Her things were read a lot too. I think she was

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called before the House UnAmerican Committee. She was also investigated.

Q. Well I guess that pretty well covers that. There was an influence to a certain extent..

A. I think it worked differently on different people. Some people pursued an independence in their reading. And I think people with a history in reading, people who had college educations, ^{whose} ~~their~~ minds were trained by the process of reading many different books, maintained certain interests which they carried right through. Or you would have a person who would ^{ask} ~~say~~, "Did you get that book in our bookshop"? And if you didn't get it in our bookshop, it was just not to be read. You had very narrow approaches by many, many people who adhered to the teaching that we must become masters of Marxism=Leninism and therefore we should read only these books. There were people who became very dogmatic and very rigid in their reading habits.

Q. OK. Now one other question we wanted to cover was more, in quotes, of your feminine interests like household equipment and reading that had something to do with household duties, the type of furniture you liked in the house, things like that.

A. And the kind of houses I liked. (laughter) I call that the fantasy chapter of my existence. First of all, as far as I was able, I strove for a certain ^{degree} ~~amount~~ of satisfying my aesthetic sense to the ^{extent} ~~degree~~ that I had ^{one} ~~it~~. ~~I think that~~ The economic factor stood in the way of getting furnishings or getting a home, ^{according to my taste and liking.} I always wanted to plan my own home and have it built, and have it right to order, everything down the line, and I fantasized about that. I got magazines to read and look at - House Beautiful, House and Garden. I wasn't the only one. There were other women in the party and in the leadership of the party who did the same thing. I know that Oleta did that too. ~~And we~~ ^{we} used to compare our reactions to certain beautiful houses that we saw, pretty much having the knowledge in our bones that we would never be in a situation to acquire anything of that sort. But we did have an interest. My interest went even a little further because my father's father, my grandfather and three uncles were all architects, and the whole question of architecture as such I thought was an extremely fascinating thing. I was reading books by Frank Lloyd

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Wright, and following his great innovations. Also I was interested in the Bauhaus in Germany from its inception, and still am, and got to know one of the people, ^{Margaret} Wildenhaim, who is a ceramicist of world renown, and who ^{now} ~~lived~~ ⁱⁿ in California. ^{participant.} ~~He~~ ^{was} a Bauhaus attendant. ~~So~~ there is a whole library of books on those kind of questions which were enormously interesting. We had, for a while, a group of landscape architects close to the party, and I recall having had quite a conversation with them, because we accidentally crossed paths ~~in a train or some way~~, about their profession. This was really fascinating. So that as far as those kind of questions were concerned they were always of great interest. But the biggest part of the problem is that you don't have the wherewithal so you don't follow it through.

~~We loved~~, ^{which we loved,} in our own living, my husband and I, we had a fireplace, and I think this was ~~the most~~ ^{an} important aspect of our home life.. to have that fireplace going whenever it was cold enough to have it going because we were fond ^{of} it and it sort of makes for a way of life which is not uncommon in San Francisco which has ^{such} a cold climate. There are still a ~~lot~~ ^{great many} of fireplaces with the lovely Italian marble ~~as~~ mantles built before the fire ^{and earthquake} and afterwards. Of course now with the big ~~victorian house~~ fad of refurbishing and restoring the Victorian houses the fireplaces are also being restored.

Q. Was your faith in the party such that you thought eventually you would get a house?

A. No. I never thought I would. Both my husband and I were in the party, and with the party salaries you could live. That was about all you could do. I never had any hope of ever achieving that. I had hopes of at least achieving a cabin in the wilderness. I never got that far. Even on that I had plans. I still have some blueprints of things which I got through the manazines for cabins that were cheap and easy. ~~That's not true any more, but they were at one point.~~ ^{Nowadays, nothing is cheap and easy.}

In the way of living, in the way of let's say our eating and so on, Rudie was very conservative. With his Swedish background it took a great many years before we sort of arrived at a point where we both enjoyed foods and the way of preparing them which were not the meat and potatoes ^{routine} situation. I can remember the first time I ever served a vegetable that was not peas. Rudie would only eat peas. Well, it was a big conflict. Also the first time I ever took

him to a Chinese restaurant. Out of sheer love of me he tried to eat the food and got violently ill because with him it was a question that this was a strange thing and he was not a cosmopolitan San Franciscan as many of our members were. They knew every real good restaurant there was and San Francisco being so full of places of that kind..we followed that through quite a lot later. It became a way of life to eat out at least once a week and to try many different cuisines in different areas.

I had one other little habit which I still have which at certain points took on great proportions. I collected recipes and I cut them out of magazines and newspapers, piled up of them. I remember at least three occasions where I had to destroy the whole thing because I didn't have room ~~xxx~~ for the storage of them. Did I use any of them? Yes occasionally I did- quite a lot of them. I mean they changed my whole manner of cooking in a way and involved Rudie in this great interest in cooking, to where he took over the big items when we had larger groupings. I frequently put myself to sleep at night by reading a cookbook, and this is something I still do. ^{occasionally} I ^{peruse} the magazines, ^{peruse} and if any of them look interesting like the Bon Appetite or the Gourmet magazine, which costs out of sight as far as cost is concerned, Nevertheless if I find one which looks as if it has some interesting article I will get it. I don't know whether this is an extravagance, but it is part of the thing that adds a little flavor to one's life. And in the party when you are working the way we had to I think there was every justification to find these small oases that would give you satisfaction because of their beauty, their aesthetics, or their appeal in the matter of food and so on. Certainly this is true of how you used music in your life, every kind of music, it doesn't matter. My music tastes ^{were} very varied, all the way from the classics ^{jazz + to} to rock. I think the only area of music I don't have a great fondness for is country music. But even that, when it lifts itself up a little bit with some of the influence of rock, is not bad. I don't know if that answers the question.

Q. No, that pretty well answers it. Only one thing, and I think you answered this partly, did you ever feel that wanting these things was incompatible with wanting a socialist revolution, or being a party member? What did you feel about that?

A. You have a very important point there. I never related it to the question of fighting for socialism. To me it was a

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relaxation from the intensity of the party work because there were many days when ^{you} had to prepare for ^{important meetings or conventions} a ~~convention~~. I worked day and night ^{on reports} ^{classes or} ^{Sometimes}. I had ~~very~~ heavy responsibilities preparing statistics on the party and that sort of thing, keeping track of any shifts and changes. Of course I was on the State Board which required also a certain amount of reading in the political fields...Political Affairs, which was the organ of the central committee, the Daily Worker, The People's World, and as ~~xxxxxxx~~ long as the Communist International was in existence they had a publication called the Inprecor, which ~~was the~~ ^{meant} International ^{Press} Correspondence, ~~sort of thing~~. I read all of that. ~~And any~~ literature that was gotten out by the party, I read. I had to read it because I was ~~either determining or~~ helping to determine what we should make a campaign on, what pamphlet or ~~what~~ book we should try to build up a campaign for because it was considered a good piece of propaganda or a good piece of agitation. ~~This required keeping in touch with all of that.~~ I think under socialism there will be so many changes that the things I picked up in this respect have meaning for the period only of my own life and for the period of the specific character of my responsibility in the party which ~~was~~ inward and which did not ^{encourage} ~~allow~~ ~~for~~ the kind of outward contacts which people who were in unions or mass organizations had. So I think I was trying to fill in a gap. The very fact that I considered it like an oasis, fooling around with blueprints of houses and fooling around with recipes was relaxation and that's the only way I could look at it. I didn't take it that seriously. In other words it didn't compete with what my main responsibility was.

Q. OK, I think that does it for now. Now there was one other point we hit on a little bit, and that was the marital relationships in the party. Now you and Rudie had a common law marriage. Did the party have a policy on whether people should or shouldn't get married?

A. ~~It~~ did not. It did not have either a policy or a viewpoint ~~that~~ if you didn't get married there was something immoral about it. There certainly wasn't anything immoral about it. The party never interfered on that score. When we got married we were part of the leadership. The general feeling there was that we would be

accepted in broader circles where this problem of our not being married might be considered out of step, or not quite right, or immoral, or whatever words you could use. Actually we never came across anything that required it. In our case we could have gone along the way we were, and I don't think we would have had any problem at all. I don't know what affect it would have had on the income tax ^{reports} every year, but I never looked into that. But the party itself did not have a policy on it.

Q. During the thirties there was Bohemianism in San Francisco. Did the party reflect this. I am trying to figure out whether the party reflected certain things in history - outside influences that had nothing to do with the party.

A. I think that it did, in ways you might consider small - modes of dress for instance, or that kind of thing. I remember a period where we all wore leather jackets and ~~and~~ little french berets. ~~And~~ everybody was wearing them. I think we picked this up from the outside. This was not something we invented in the party. But they were practical garments for us. It was a period of crisis, and even if you didn't have a real leather jacket you had something close to it. Of course they didn't have vinyl in those days. But it was imitative of what was going on generally. Bohemianism, I think, grows just like the Hippieism. In periods of crisis where great upheavals are taking place, when not only life styles are changing but the values of people are changing, and the post war period, after World War I was characteristic of that. I think that ~~that~~ the Bohemianism that expressed itself during that period ~~was~~ the result of the war and the subsequent crisis. Now, since world war II, we have had something similar. .. with the fifties and particularly the sixties which brought forth all kinds of things, some of them ~~which~~ were good and some of them which were bad. The big drug culture, for example, is bad. The flower children were rebelling against what they thought a useless way of life, of working only to get all those washing ~~machines~~ machines and television sets, houses and cars that would tie you up so completely with monthly payments that you could never see your way clear. ~~And vegetarianism is another thing which has shown up in many groupings.~~ Now the new left which had its great high point in the period of the struggle against the war in Vietnam ^{and} which touched everybody who was against Vietnam, ~~they~~ I think took on some of these things also...the way of dress, ~~the~~

~~ways of life, etc.~~
~~the vegetarianism~~, which became very popular, ~~and so on.~~ Although
the vast mass of the hippies, where are they now? I think a lot
of them are in co-operatives and collectives up in the mountains,
~~but~~^{or} they are assimilated by society in somewhat new ways- in little
businesses, and they have their ~~way of life~~^{life styles} which has an influence
on everybody else. It is sort of an interaction that works in
both directions, and I think this was very obviously at work in
the thirties.

Side two - first tape.

Q. How did you dress in that period. Did you feel you had to
dress in a certain way because you were a party leader? - during
any period, but during the thirties particularly.

A. During the thirties I think the thing that determined everything
was how much money you had. A lot of us were wearing hand-me-
downs. Quite a few people were making their own clothes - the
women did. Outside of this leather jacket thing and the beret
there was not a uniform way in which we all got dressed. I think
it was a matter of getting dressed in what was most practical,
in cheap dresses, in blouses and skirts. Blouses and skirts was
the answer to almost everybody's life. You had a good skirt and
then you had a whole variety of blouses. But this was true of
everybody - not only our movement, but the whole of society, or
that segment of society which could be called the ~~lower~~^{working} class,
lower middle class, or even the middle class. Later I think
individual tastes began to express themselves, ~~and~~. To the degree
that I remember how people dressed, I can recall a few that were ~~always~~
very elegantly dressed.

Q. How would you like to have dressed, if you could have?

A. (laughter) I liked sport ~~things~~^{clothes}. I like things that are easy,
that don't require a lot of fussing with, laundering, pressing, and
all of that. The appearance of all these new synthetic materials
is a great boon. I think elegant simplicity, if that means anything
to you, can probably be applied to the kind of clothing I admire.
I always wanted to have something like ~~the~~^a Chanel suit. That was
one of those fantasy things. The closest I got - once I got a
dress that was designed by Claire McCardel, who was a designer
back in the 40's, or fifties. She is long dead. But I found it
in a sale. ~~And~~^{so} it was a very lovely dress, I thought. It had
all the difference that dollars will make in almost anything.

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Q. Let's see now. Let's - there is this other thing. We were discussing bohemianism, and we both skirted the subject of the party and sex, and the male leadership in relation to the women, and I wondered if women came to you with problems of pregnancy or abortion, and what did you do about them?

A. Yes. We had both. We also had problems with some of the men comrades who would try to force their attentions on some of the women. This wasn't always the question of it being not wanted. Some did - you know it depended a lot on the individual. But there were some who developed what was almost a sick situation. When they were alone with a woman in the room almost the first thing they would do would be to attack her. There was one person who had to be removed from leadership because of that problem. And in his case it bordered ^{on} a sickness. But that is exceptional. There was promiscuity among a lot of the people. Here again I can't judge whether it was any worse than it ^{was} ~~would be~~ outside of the party. The party didn't have a set of morals on these things. In general it was said that one should not indulge in promiscuous affairs, one after another, ~~with people~~. And ^{one} famous story was always given as an illustration. That is the famous story that if you are thirsty you drink out of a clean glass. You don't take a glass that has been used by many other people. This was thrown out as Lenin's view. I don't think that the problem was of such ^a nature that this promiscuity among people was damaging to anybody or anybody's work. Outside of the agitational aspect that was exemplified by this quotation of the directive that was given there was not - the party wasn't told, the clubs weren't told promiscuity is out, and so on.

On the first part of your question on pregnancy and abortion, because of the position where I was, and I don't know what the experiences were of other people, I did discover that the party did help (I discovered it, it wasn't told to me) did give help to women who wanted an abortion. It came up one time when one of our traveling representatives had spent several days in the outlying areas and had a sort of quick half a night stand with the wife of the organizer of that outlying area. And she became pregnant. She told her husband when it happened, and the whole question was brought to the party, to a committee which included the district organizer. I was in the org. department, but not on the leading committee. When their conference was over I was called in and told about this event, and told that I should attempt

to find someone who could recommend an abortionist. I was at the time 27 years old. I was married, but I didn't know of any abortionist. ~~This was about the last thing -~~ so I had a problem and I asked, "Well, I don't know how to do this!". I was told, "well, ask some of the women." - "Ask a few of them, and ask them where they might think you could get the information!" It turned out that I didn't have to go very far at all. The first person I chose to talk to happened to be one of the people in the Young Communist League, and I don't know why I did that except that here are a group of young people, and my age was not very much different from theirs. And casually she answered. She was not at all surprised by the question. She asked me did I want to make the arrangements, who was to make the arrangements? ~~She said she could make them.~~ It would be better if the person involved would make them. I said well I think that would be better. I would like to give that person the name of the doctor, ~~of the man,~~ ^{or} whoever was the abortionist, and let her make her own arrangements. ~~So I was told.~~ I was given the name of the abortionist, and the address, and instructions how to handle it, how much it cost, that you came with the cash. You did not make an appointment. You came and you had to wait for your turn. Apparently this abortionist didn't keep any records of any kind. That is one way of protecting yourself. You pay cash. There is no record, no appointment book. There is nothing. So I passed that information along. I had the information now and, of course, the committee knew it. The party knew that I had that piece of information. So, as a matter of fact, I think, if I recall correctly, there were some half dozen women over as many years (this happened in the period between '30 and the time I went to prison)- there were about half a dozen I gave the information to. An interesting thing is that this particular abortionist had been an extremely famous one in San Francisco, and who had operated in San Francisco for almost half a century, and suddenly there came into the newspapers the whole story about this abortionist. I think it was her obituary.

Q. Inez Burns, you mean?

A. Yes. It was her, and I think it was either an obituary or the announcement of her death or something that made me realize what the story said, what a famous abortionist she was and how long she had been an abortionist and so on. Now this is my own personal experience with the problem. In other words my conclusion had

to be that the party was not opposed to abortion. But there were never any questions asked by the party at least as to why do you want the abortion. And to the women I gave it to, I didn't ask why do you want it. And I bring this in because there is now - you can have an abortion legally, but there is a very long debate going on within the medical circles, particularly at San Francisco General Hospital where the welfare patients come. And they can have a free abortion if they need it. It has to be based on some good reason however, and they are asked the reason. It has got to be either a question of ^{physical or mental, on the part of the woman,} illness, ⁿ inability to support a child, if the child is a result of an extra-marital relationship, the father ran away, ^{rape} or some good reason. They are performing a great many abortions under this program of people on welfare. And one of the doctors came to the conclusion, because he had to do some many of them (he was an intern and he was just learning to be a surgeon) ^{that although} - it is a very simple operation - a very simple procedure, and very harmless unless of course you have too many of them, and ^{that} that was his point. Some of the women were using this as their method of birth control. They attempted the rhythm method, but if they got caught they had no problem. They had their California Medical Assistance, and they are going to the San Francisco General Hospital ^{for an abortion.}

Q. You feel differently about abortions now. How did you feel about them then? About giving the information to these women?

A. I was disturbed by this assignment - very disturbed. First of all because it seemed to me that this being done so casually meant that the party had no objection to what I saw as an objectionable procedure. To me it seemed a horrible procedure, ^{mainly because of its illegality & the conditions under which} At that time I didn't know enough scientifically - at what point does real life begin - and I was very heavily under the morality of my mother, my forebearers, of general society. And though there were a great many abortions that took place, they were so sub rosa you had visions of the conditions under which they were performed. This is true you know. ^{being} It is still true. Unless you are in a country or a state like California, or a country where abortions are legalized and are carried on by trained people like doctors. Now they are training at the University of California Medical School, ⁿ they are training the nurses to perform these abortions because they are such a simple procedure, and many of the women prefer to have women do it anyway. However at

abortions were usually performed.

that time I was really appalled by the assignment. Time gave a different vision. Certainly the experiences of the last thirty years in our country as a whole, I think, has changed my mind quite a lot. I agree with the doctor who says it should not be used as a method of birth control, but I also agree with the conclusion that a woman has a right to decide what is to happen to her body, what is to be done, and whether or not the capacity for raising a child exists. I think that pretty much covers it.

Q. I have an ~~awful~~ awful lot of questions from the last tape which I should have brought up then. Here is the other question I had. How did you feel, you and Rudie both, when Rudie had to remove his brother from the party?

A. That was a very traumatic experience for Rudie. I despaired of his ^{health -} he got a migraine headache ~~that lasted~~ (he suffered from migraines) which lasted three weeks. We had to get a doctor and he had to get a shot of morphine to bring the pain to an end. Of course it affected me very much. I was not as devoted to Walter, that was sure, but it affected me very much. We had had a great deal of social relationship between Walter and his wife and Rudie and I, as different as we were. Walter's wife was some thirteen years older than Walter ~~was~~, and there was quite a span in terms of our life experience. But it was a very, very traumatic experience and I believe that I at one point said, "You ought to get off that ~~get~~ damn committee."

Q. Did they speak to each other after that?

A. They did not for a very, very long time.

Q. Was this - did the party tell him he couldn't talk to him, or did they just separate?

A. The party didn't say you couldn't talk to him, but Rudie, who was a purist, ~~he~~ wouldn't make any effort - ~~at the first period~~ he made absolutely no effort to approach Walter, and Walter would probably have thrown him out of the house or beaten him up or something. Walter and Hazel were so outraged that they thought Rudie should be expelled and that I should leave Rudie and leave the party. This was their view - we should all get out of the party. We didn't have any communication with Walter and Hazel for ~~it must~~ ~~really have been~~ almost ten years. Then we went to a big mass meeting in the Scottish Rite auditorium where Linus Pauling spoke. ~~And~~ Linus Pauling was one of Walter's great heroes. I say that because Walter got these fixations and would rigidly hang on. Walter and Hazel were there. Now that is a rather a large

auditorium. Rudie and I were sitting together and we saw them walking in before the program started. We didn't say anything to each other, but we saw them. Suddenly Rudie, without talking to me about it, got up and walked over to Walter and held out his hand, and said "Walter, I am very, very happy to see you." And Walter turned his back on Rudie and walked away. Rudie came back, ~~he was~~ in tears, which made me realize how this really had affected him, ~~which lasted~~ ^{all those} ten years. They were very devoted as kids, and everything. Hazel, when she heard the story (she saw the incident) had a discussion with Walter and they decided, after a discussion that was pretty extensive, that Walter's behavior was inexcusable; that what Rudie was attempting to do was to apologize for the action which Hazel said, was "after all you should remember Walter that what Rudie did was what the party leadership wanted him to do." Some weeks later we got a note from them in which they proposed that we have dinner together. We did. We ate somewhere out, I don't remember where, but we had dinner during which we just caught up with each other's health situation, and did not discuss this problem. In fact the problem itself was never again discussed. When I left the party Rudie left, but he didn't sign our statement. Walter and Hazel welcomed that, of course. This was the correct step to have taken, but we were awfully late in taking it. But it had great impact on us, really great. I don't believe anyone in the state committee or on the state board was aware of this except possibly Oleta, with whom I discussed the problem.

Q. Walter was kicked out for what. You mentioned it.

A. There was a strike, I think a Machinists strike. What I cannot remember was whether he was a member of the machinists union or not. I don't think he was. He was in the Lithographers Union. He had become a lithographer after he got out of WW II. So he was on the trade union committee, the commission which headed up the work of the trade unionists. It was in that commission that the great conflict over the policy toward the Machinists local and the machinists strike was worked out. And it was that commission which brought the charges against Walter.

Q. I just wondered, because I left it hanging up on the air. And the other thing hanging up in the air in my mind is the relationship between you and your sister. I know how you grew up together, played together, but I don't know what happened after you got married and you just mentioned briefly that you had Christmas with her - what was it. Was it a break - or what?

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A. We were good friends during our childhood, but when I married Fritz, that was the first break. She didn't like him. And if she didn't like somebody she carried it to an nth degree. She also didn't like Rudie very much, and she was also extremely critical - she was critical at the time I became active in the Young Workers League and the Young Communist League, and when I went to work for the party she thought that was a great mistake. She was extremely critical of that action on my part, and the fact that I was giving so much of myself to the movement - this was upsetting to her. A change came when I was arrested and when I was in prison. Then she came to my support very strongly. She had married then almost at the same time. She had married this young man who decided to go to Spain. That affected her very much. So she developed rather quickly then into a good sympathizer of the party. And after her husband came back they found that really they could not live together any more because they were practically strangers by then. She got a divorce. But she became extremely active in some movements which were going on which involved the women at the time. I think this started while I was in prison. She worked very closely with Violet Orr on some project that Violet was on. And Rosalie was selected at one point for one of the state training schools. Almost simultaneously with that she saw a doctor at Violet's suggestion. Apparently Rosalie was having problems of nervousness, or almost hysteria at times, and of working with people because she was a person with a very stubborn mind, almost immovable. And so she did see a doctor. And the doctor, a woman doctor, gave her a full examination, and told her she probably would be unable to have children. Now Rosalie was already thirty years old. When that happened she went completely to pieces. She got hysterical because she thought the greatest thing in the world she wanted was a child, and so finally she deliberately went out to find somebody who would be the father of a child. So at this historic point she lands in the state training school where she meets Leo, who had a broken engagement. The woman he was engaged to couldn't tolerate his being in the party. She was anti-party and so the engagement had to be broken. I think that Elmer Hanoff played a little role in helping them to meet each other. I don't know the period that they went together. But they got married. They were no sooner married than Rosalie wanted a baby. Leo was so upset that he came to me and said that he did not want a child. He thought it would

be a handicap. His frame of mind then was of that view - that when you were in the party you don't add to your burdens by having a child. My answer to him was if you love her it is possible for you to discuss it with each other and come to some conclusion. This is something the two of you have to decide. This isn't something that can be decided ~~outside of that~~ ^{by anyone else}. He said, well couldn't you convince her not to have a baby. I said I wouldn't even try because I knew her stubborn turn of mind and that she would resent it enormously if I tried to interfere. The upshot of it was that they did make a decision to have children. Rosalie had one very good approach to it. She didn't want them too close together. She wanted at least three years between them because when the children are too close together all sorts of problems do develop. In that period we were closer again, Rosalie and I, from the time - she did get in the party from the time of my imprisonment and the time of her first pregnancy. Then Leo was working full time and later went over full time with the People's World. Rosalie ~~then~~ had a second child. In that entire period she considered herself as being used by Leo, used by the party, that this was encouraged by me. And ~~she~~ ^{she} accused Leo and me of "living off the working class." She could be very ruthless, so that our relationship became extremely strained, plus the fact that she never came over to visit my mother who lived three blocks away. If my mother wanted to see her she had to climb up that hill to visit Rosalie. She wouldn't go to my mother's home because she couldn't tolerate Bernhard Fischer who was my mother's husband at the time. So our relationship became extremely strained. She did not want any interference from anyone in the family with her way of life or her problems, and she resented if anything were ever said. On the ~~contrary~~ ^{other hand}, she could give you pages of criticism about me. The best phrase for it is a love-hate relationship because there were periods when she was very loving, but the underlying thing was this great resentment which I think grew out of the fact that I had initiated the road into the party.

Q. This is incredible. We covered a whole tape with nothing but what was left.

A. We did this once before.

Q. I think, so. It's just part of the whole pattern if we want to get everything.

Q. You just started to tell me about this job you had. Do you want to go into it just a touch more?

A. It was a job with the Claude Lindsey Company. I think it was called the Claude Lindsey Company or Claude Lindsey & Company, which built houses right after World War II when housing was not ^{being} built for the general public, but ^{only} for the veterans. There was a decision made that housing for veterans should be made available. ^{This Company} I know that he was building houses in other parts of the state, like around Tracy - outside the City. But his operation at that point was in the Sunset District of San Francisco where this firm constructed rows and rows of little boxes, ticky tacky little boxes, for veterans. They were the only ones these houses could be sold to. I worked as an assistant to the bookkeeper-secretary. I don't recall how long I worked there..almost a year. One of my jobs was to take the telephone calls of complaints that the new tenants had. The houses were slapped together so fast it was almost unbelievable. They had a couple of salesmen, and a boss, and an associate. I think there were about five men who were there, and this bookkeeper secretary and me. ^{The Company's office was} We were in a street level store and it was temporary, because once this building project was over they would move elsewhere. It was ^a very lucrative ^{business since} because they charged ^{for the houses} a good high price ^{of the} because there was a housing shortage in San Francisco. One of my jobs was to get the complaints, and ^{it rained} every time there was a rain the phone started ringing because either the floors buckled or leaks appeared in the roof, or the toilets began to flush backwards, ^{they were} overflowed. It was just terrible. We used to get pages of complaints. They would have to patch it up. Because what can you do - you can't rebuild a house. I don't know enough about building materials, but I had the impression from the description of the building materials that these houses were very poorly constructed, slap-dash, It was just a terribly thing. ..and ^{they were} very unattractive houses. In general five room places - a place with two bedrooms for the potential children. I stayed there just about that length of time and then I decided to quit and was on the verge of looking for other work in the secretarial field. because it was the easiest thing I could do. But I was going through a rather dismal period of re-evaluation and trying to think what can I do with my life. I had been in the party so long and done only that work. It just didn't seem as if there was anything I was prepared to do that would give any kind of satisfaction. I was

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still active in the party. I did a lot of things in the party, but I was sort of at loose ends for a period of time. I don't recall how long at this point, but it was a number of months. In 1947 I was called by the district office and offered the position of political action. They were creating anew responsibility called "political action" which ^{had to do with} ~~was~~ the implementation of the party's political program. In other words the district organizer is still responsible for the development of the political line and so on, but this was the kind of job where I would particularly be responsible for the party ^{work in relation to} ~~people who were active in~~ organizations like the ^{of a coalition, political character.} ~~Americans for Democratic Action~~, there was an organization called Progressive Labor something-or-other here in California, ^{and} the Progressive Democrats. We ^{had} ~~had~~ still quite a few people ^{had close contact with} ~~who were~~ in the Democratic party. And ^{it seems} ~~it~~ was a preparatory period toward participation in the 1948 election campaign. The policies were not fully worked out yet, but one of the ^{perspectives} ~~things which we worked on~~ was ^{that there was} ~~there~~ going to be some development nationally which would require heavy work ^{in this area} ~~on this question~~ because of the way the party alignments were shaping up between the Democratic and Republican parties - there might be a new political development - a new realignment.

Q. Did this interest you?

A. Yes it did. It was of a different nature than the org. secretarial work. I wasn't sure I could carry it out. I ^{was somewhat} ~~felt~~ inexperienced. ^{in this particular field.} The agreement was that we would try it, and that I would have the full cooperation of the ^{state} ~~board~~.

Q. Did you just accept this - that they let you go for a year and a half or two. It was sort of a cavalier approach. How did you respond to it?

A. I was between things, you see. It was the right psychological moment. If I had a plan of what I might do with my life I might not have accepted it. You know in a way, when I did get out of full time work, it was kind of a relief for a period of time. But when you have done something as long as that, ^{my convictions} ~~and I was still active~~ ^{were still very strong, and} ~~I attended all meetings and took club assignments.~~ I ~~guess~~ I was very susceptible to doing any kind of a job within the party.

Q. I am trying to figure out - you never actually thought - now is my chance to do something else - something I've always wanted to do.

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A. No. I never thought of ^{it} in ~~that term~~. *those terms.*

Q. You were still a devoted party member, then?

A. That's right. I thought of it more in terms of well, this is what I have done all my life. This is a challenging position. Certainly it was a challenge. ~~And I think I felt they were offering me this job and they must have some confidence that I do have the ability to bring it off. So I agreed. Of course, this was 1947 and this was the period~~ ^{of} the cold war, ~~began. And in that period we faced a whole new ball game because what happened immediately after the war was that the alliance which had won the war, the unity, fell apart and there were sharp disagreements between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union as to the political arrangements of post-war Europe. I won't go into that~~ ^{more fully.} ~~completely.~~ ^{problems arose then.} Everybody knows what ~~they are~~ ^{they are} I think. With that, with what was going on in these political struggles between Truman, who was then ~~the~~ President, and Stalin and Churchill, the government ~~started,~~ ^{initiated,} ~~a~~ ^a persuasive government persecution, and anti-Communist hysteria. It was in this period we began to see the big lie about the danger of communist insurrection in the country and communist infiltration - of ~~interruption~~ ^{disruption} of the life of the country ^{permitted} by the Soviet Union, and so on. Russia was not a military threat. This is a point that was ~~pointed out~~ ^{made} by Gary Mills in his introduction to Lillian Hellman's latest book, Scoundrel Time. He ~~was the one who~~ said that Russia was not a military threat but an ideological threat to Americans. He qualified this by saying it wasn't a threat to America, but to Americanism. I think that he has a very important point there, ^{explaining why the administration} ~~why they~~ developed this great anti-communist hysteria within the country. ~~The cold war crusade (this surprised me enormously when I started to think about it and look up questions for this interview)~~ ^{THE} ~~this~~ cold war crusade went on for a quarter of a century. It is not even over today. You would have to say it is still going on with a different tone and with adjustments which come with every great struggle over Vietnam, over Rhodesia, over Israel and the Arab countries, any question where there has been a conflict - it is still there. ~~And the detante is another avenue of maneuvering between Russia and America. But in any case,~~ the cold war was the background for unleashing this tremendous anti-red campaign. It started under

Truman's ~~encouragement to the Attorney General~~ urging the ~~Attorney General~~ Attorney General to create a list of ~~organizations which would be~~, organizations which were suspect as to their program, organizations which would be considered as either a place where you would find communists at work, or organizations whose secret plans were to support communists or organizations ~~that~~ whose main program ended up as anti-American. It was a very long list and it existed for a long time. It was used vociferously, and it was over used and misused. Also it was in that period when the House Un-American Committee was set up. ~~And~~ It was that year when the Hollywood Ten had their hearings - 1947. So that there was a growing atmosphere of anti-Communism but broader than that - anti-democratic rights as to activity and thoughts that people had. ~~And~~ It was at that turning point in 1947 ~~that there were~~ that big movements began to develop against the cold war, but specifically against the House Un-American Activities Committee, and specifically against the use of the Attorney General's list.

Henry Wallace decided he would enter the arena of the presidential campaign as a candidate for president.

Q. Pardon me Louise. Before we get into the IPP I want to ask you just one question. How did you feel about all these repressive measures. Did you feel they would affect you in any way- that you might go to jail?

A. Not at that time. But we all felt - I think the party in general felt that all these repressive measures were highly unjust. We were very active with the organizations that exposed the HUAC, in support of the Hollywood Ten, and so on. Personally I did not feel any danger at all - not then - not at that time. The strange part of that part of the anti communist hysteria, it directed itself not to the communist party or its members, but to those that they suspected of being communists in other organizations, and particularly among prominent people like the Hollywood actors and writers who were people who had big roles to play in the ~~manner~~ way of propaganda - ^{or} what ^{HUAC} they thought was selling communist propaganda in the films.

Q. Now the Communist International no longer existed, and there were no connections with Russia and the party of the U.S.?

A. No.

Q. Did anybody ever say well Browder was really off beat? This must have shown that he was.

A. Yes. It certainly showed it because as soon as the war was

over the ^{Grand} Alliance collapsed, and it proved how wrong he was.
Q. And how naive for a political person.

A. Henry Wallace's entrance into the presidential campaign was brought about directly - it was really a campaign against the cold war ~~drift~~ and against its domestic consequences which were now already very clear- this calculated campaign against the people whose names were on the lists, ^{only} some of whom were communists. ^{Wallace} He carried his campaign on a platform reflecting the United Nations charter for a peaceful socialist-capitalist co-existence. ~~And He~~ He was against the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) alliance, ^{called} ~~xxxxx~~ for progressive capitalism "to place human rights above property rights". That was the essence of his program. Of course, this was ~~very, very~~ strongly supported by the communists, ~~party~~. It was seen as a movement which might very well emerge as a challenge to the two party system. ~~And It~~ It seemed as though, in this presidential campaign, a real impact could be made against the cold war both domestically and internationally. There were great illusions that this movemet which was started by Wallace would represent a new viable mass party as an alternative to the bi-partisan cold war policy. However from the outset it was clear that there was an insufficient base of ~~people~~ ^{the people, the movement} among in labor generally ^{specifically and} in resources. The labor officialdom supported Truman. ~~And The~~ The biggest obstacle was to achieve a place on the ballot. It required millions of signatures merely to get on the ballot, and there were very few people who could undertake such a program. Only the communist party could mobilize door to door collections. ~~They could bring in enough signatures to get such an organization on the ballot.~~ It has to be stated that within the movement around Henry Wallace's candidacy there were strong feelings that ~~he would not attempt to run for president, or he should run for president but not attempt to form a party - to run as an independent,~~ ^{campaign} in the course of which, ~~and if he should succeed in winning, then a political party could be developed around the concepts xxxx under which he was working.~~ ^{getting a high vote or winning,} This debate went on for a while. ~~And It~~ It is true that the Communist Party played a role ~~in there~~ in trying to bring ^{about a movement} it to a head for the formation of a third party as quickly as possible on the reasoning that if that were done ^{it would be possible to} ~~you would create~~ ~~coalesce~~ a coalition around Henry Wallace in a substantial and in a visible way ^{showing} that there would be ~~every~~ channels open ^{for} guaranteeing that this party could become a powerful organization. But, as I already

Lam: indicated, they had some great handicaps to overcome. So the debate raged among the supporters within the communist party because the communist party had virtually dedicated itself to helping Wallace's campaign to become president on the basis of his program.

There was also an internal debate in the party over this question. The only state in the union which could have developed a door to door campaign to get Wallace on the ballot where such a large number of signatures were required was California. Since it was one of the few that could achieve this, the question of whether a political party should be launched was much discussed for a long time. Consultation with California on this was established because it would depend on the California party's ability to get the Progressive Party on the ballot.

Ken: Pardon me. Was there a discussion in the lower groups of the party in California on this?

Lam: No. None at all. It was all on the highest levels - between the national committee and the state board.

Ken: Were you on the national committee or the state board at this time?

Lam: I was not a member of the national committee at the time although I believe I may have been on the state committee. I do not recall this.

Ken: You said something that struck me here - you said "illusion". Now that's your word. Did you think then that he didn't have a chance? What was your thinking on this, since you were going to be the one -

Lam: I had no idea whether he really had a chance. I knew we had to measure it - to find out if we could really achieve a place on the ballot in California. To the degree that I was consulted and can remember in my mind it was a toss up as to whether he should build a party now or just stick to a campaign for president and throw all the resources and all the people into every possibility of doing that. The final decision was that we in California should undertake this petition campaign, and try to get the Progressive Party on the ballot. If that were done in California, it would give impetus to the rest of the country for getting the Progressive Party on the ballot as well. In many states it is very easy to get on the ballot - so that there would be a base created which was the

Lam: problem that Henry Wallace had. He had a following among the rank and file Democrats, the progressive Democrats, the ADA (Americans for Democratic Action) and certain organizations of this kind, some of which were also caught up in the anti-communist fervor. So, from the very beginning, the Wallace campaign was a battleground between the communists, their sympathizers, and the non-communists, all being supporters of Wallace - all being supporters of the same program. Efforts were made to keep the conflict within confines which would not destroy this great potential that existed because it was a potential for the development of a powerful movement anyway.

Ken: Should I ask you any questions now, or at the end of this? Does this interfere with the flow of your thinking?

Lam: No.

Ken: Well, I want to know how you were told that this was a decision, and what you thought about it.

Lam: I'll come to that.

Ken: OK - maybe I had just better make notes then, and ask later.

Lam: In any event, it was finally decided. It was decided not only by the party here, but the party here consulted with leading progressive democrats who had great influence among the rank and file of the Democratic party. The California Council of Democratic clubs began in that period. One of the people that was very prominent and very much in support of Henry Wallace was Bob Kenny who recently died. He wavered on the question for a while, but finally he agreed we should try it.

Well, with the history of progressivism and independent voting in California there was no question but that there was a base. There has always been a deeply rooted indigenous radicalism in the State of California which showed itself way back in the last century, and certainly in the EPIC movement of the 30's and so on. From these roots there developed a movement for the collection of 275,970 signatures, which was what was required to put this party on the ballot in California. Signers had to be registered voters. Now this was almost a superhuman job.

In the meantime, I had been involved in all the meetings and discussions where we were discussing

Lam: coalition in support of Wallace, and the development of that coalition. That required, of course, consultation with the leading trade union people and consultation with leading progressive democrats, and so on. We had already been engaged to a point in doing that. And I was already involved in having discussions with the various county organizations of the party and with people who were working within other organizations about the possibility of the petition campaign because we had to have some knowledge that we could really put it over.

The collection of signatures had to begin in late 1947, and carried through early in 1948. And I believe the filing of the petitions had to be sometime in April or May. We had about a six month period to do this. You usually have to collect twice as many as are needed because they are combed over - and people who are not registered, their signatures would be kicked out; or in cases where names were misspelled, or if the signature wasn't exactly as registered - all of these things would happen. We were aided by a drought that winter! We had the kind of drought like this year of 1976. There was no rain, and so the signature collectors were able to keep up their work during the whole winter without interference. Many signature collectors came from the rank and file members of many of the unions and organizations which went on record in support of this third party movement.

However, the biggest job was done by members of the communist party. I can say this unqualifiedly; can say it from my personal experience with the mobilization of the party and with the political relationships with the other organizations. Our entire party leadership was involved. The People's World did a magnificent job in bringing out the news of the breadth of the movement of support, which stimulated everyone. In fact, it was an example of what could be done with united action, united front action and coalition.

The Progressive Party (or IPP as it was known in California) achieved a place on the ballot. When the election took place, I have to say unfortunately the illusions were so strong among some of our membership that the disappointment of Truman's re-election was very traumatic. It turned out that most of the votes that Wallace did get came from New York and California with a scattering throughout the rest of the country. It became clear that except for California the rest of the country had not really gotten into a viable

Lam: movement for Wallace. There were coalitions in New York. I do not recall in how many states he was on the ballot. In face of the defeat and poor showing for Wallace, whatever there was built up in the way of coalition was lost. The organizational structures disappeared and so on. I think that's what we can say about the third party.

Ken: I do have a few questions and then we'll stop. We've gone way beyond the time we should. Number one, I really don't think I got the answer. How did they tell you they wanted you to take on this big chore, because you were the one responsible for it?

Lam: Well, as soon as the decision was made that they were going to do this, I was already up to my neck in preliminary work. I was deep in coalition work with people and forces who were working in politics in general. We were not only involved in that period in the presidential campaign. Congressmen and Senators and so on had to be elected during the 1948 campaign. So the party's participation in these campaigns, and the necessity of the party having to make policy decisions in regard to the congressional districts put me in contact with most of the congressional districts. I was functioning as a coordinator actually, meeting with our county organizations and bringing the reports to the state board.

I met with many people who were at that time extremely active around the issues which Wallace presented, even before it became clear that we were going to have a channel through which we could really fight for these issues. Actually I was already in the work. When the decision was made - I think I was called in as quickly as it was made and told we are going to go ahead with the petition campaign. So, OK. It was part of the job of being in political action.

Ken: Did you agree that this was right?

Lam: Oh yes. I agreed to do it. And I agreed that we were ready for it. In the course of the campaign, as we began to do it, and as from day to day we collected signatures, as from day to day we had to get more collectors, and we had to have more and more money,

Lam: we became aware of the big problems we had to solve. The solution usually came from the party and the party membership. You will remember the period. It was a period where everything, everything we had, was thrown into it.

Ken: And the party people accepted this without question?

Lam: Yes, and I think this was because of the political atmosphere of the country. It was a way of fighting back on the questions of the cold war, of fighting for what the United Nations stood for. Many of us had the illusion that even if he didn't win the election, we would have a base which would be a broad united coalition which could be broadened with the perspective that ultimately a third party would evolve. There were times when I realized the party had taken on a very big job. I thought it was going to be extremely tough to carry through. I have to say without the party it would not have gone at all.

Ken: When you say you met with leading people who were in the democratic party and in trade unions, did you mean you met with party people who were in those organizations or with leading people who were not party members?

Lam: I met with party people in the main. But I also met with countless non party people as well.

The relationship with non party people came through those members who were in the organizations, although we had meetings on the top level with Robert Kenny and others. He was the ex-attorney general of the State of California. In Los Angeles, which had the biggest base and collected the most signatures, the party leadership there had personal contact and personal relationship with many of the leading progressive democrats. This grew out of a much longer period of leadership in Los Angeles working with these people quite openly than was true here.

In Alameda County they had a very fine set up. And in San Francisco there was a good set up too under Oleta's leadership.

Ken: I find that funny because this was during the cold war when repressive legislation was just started and there was evidently no fear on the part of leading political people. Yet there was

Ken: terrible fear in Hollywood. Why was that?

Lam: The House UnAmerican Committee went into Hollywood. It must also be said that there were certain people we didn't approach even though they may have voted for Wallace or supported the IPP.

Ken: I didn't know this, and this is what confuses me now, and I don't understand it. Wallace went over big in New York and on the West Coast. Did the National Committee let you know at any time that it wasn't going well anyplace else. Did they let you out on this limb of having this great crusade and doing all this work in limbo?

Lam: They may have. I never heard any explanation. Bill might have had it. We had to make the final decision - could we do it, or couldn't we do it. But they kept hammering at us that what we did would make the difference. We were the only state that had the capacity to put over this enormous campaign. You had to measure it by the number of signatures that you could get. If you could get that it means you have a mass base. They were not wrong in that. They were wrong in that it didn't swing the country.

Ken: I wonder why that error was made?

Lam: I think it was bad judgment or lack of knowing the facts - lack of judging the facts they knew. You know you can hear your own echoes when you get into a thing like this. A movement can get rolling and the people in it are working so hard and all the successes are immediately fed back. It means a constant thing. From day to day we knew exactly how many signatures there were. There were people in towns all over the state reporting every day how many signatures they had. And then the reports came into the state office. We didn't have any computers in those days. You know it was an organizational achievement which had an impact though it did not succeed in launching a third party.

Ken: It certainly was.

Lam: Much of the credit went to Los Angeles. Their membership just turned itself out. In fact most of the members did, but if L.A. hadn't pulled their share we wouldn't have made it because in the North we couldn't come through with enough signatures.

Lam: When the signatures were all gone over by the County Clerk and by the State, we did have more than 275,970 valid signatures. We had collected about half a million. Of course you know that people will sign, and that doesn't make them your ally. You know how you feel when you sign a petition. But there certainly was enough organization in motion that you might expect it would continue. The failure to continue as a movement, I think, was contributed to by the enormity of Truman's victory which gave him great confidence, and the fact that immediately after the election came the repression. All hell broke loose, and it was directed in that early period against Wallace and Wallace supporters. And many of them were not communists - a lot of them, particularly in New York. So the sweep began to come there, and it led into the period of McCarthyism.

Ken: It happened in the unions too, didn't it? Were they kicked out of the CIO because they supported Wallace, or for other reasons?

Lam: That was one of the reasons, but there were other reasons as well. I don't have the year that happened.

Ken: It's around. It's a part of History. I've got it in my notebook, and my notebook is at home.

Lam: I think one more point can be made about this. The reason it didn't go on (as I always think of it as "gone with the wind") - there were these steps taken by the government and the administration and so on, but on the other hand some of the supporting groups around Wallace pulled out partly because of the anti-communist hysteria and because they couldn't see any reason to continue after such a defeat.

Ken: What did they do - go over to Truman then?

Lam: Some of them, probably. As far as the party was concerned, you see, as far as we were concerned, we had shot our bolt. There was nothing to grab hold of afterwards. The left led CIO unions were expelled from the CIO, so the labor base was decimated. In fact Wallace never had substantial labor support in the whole labor movement, which was one of the weaknesses in his campaign.

Ken: Did people drop out of the party after that just out of disillusion or not?

Lam: As I recall, we lost party members during that period, but I can't measure or recall what

Lam: what number of them left in disappointment in the Wallace campaign or because of the repression and the McCarthyism.

There was the Stockholm Peace petition because there was again danger of war. The Korean War started in 1949, and these factors had great impact on the membership. Trade union people who were in those left-led unions did leave the party because, in many of those areas, they would lose their jobs. And they had families. So it was a question of keeping their jobs.

Ken: There is one question about the period after the Wallace campaign, when everything sort of fell apart, did the party fall apart too, too much?

Lam: As I recall, it didn't. It went right on with its usual work. The elections took place in November. I think we had a People's World campaign which takes place in December, or did at that time.

Ken: How did you feel then, after you had put all this work and energy into the campaign? What was left for you?

Lam: I accepted it as I guess we accepted many other defeats. You get sort of inured to it. I didn't feel any personal loss, as I recall. I don't think I had any illusions that there would be a great victory. I thought Wallace would get a much higher vote than he did. I also did not have any illusions with regard to a continuing organization except in the loosest sense because there was not a party form of organization around the Progressive Party. Wallace used the name of Progressive Party and his whole election campaign was conducted that way.

I don't believe I had the illusion that the movement was going to go on at a high pace, although I anticipated it would have some loose structure of a formation which could go on and become something of a coalition to develop into a more permanent structure given time. However, the Truman victory was so overwhelming, the cold war moved so quickly, and the events leading to the McCarthy period were unfolding so rapidly that we didn't have time to think about the Wallace defeat with any great concentration.

Ken: Was there any analysis of the election afterward by the leading party people?

Lam: Yes. I am sure there was.

Ken: You weren't involved in it then?

Lam: Oh yes, but I don't recall the details.

Ken: Wondered if they involved you to discuss it with them.

Lam: Oh yes - the State Board and the State Committee. I was involved. The only thing I don't remember the full analysis. It probably exists in the People's World files.

Ken: Another thing then. What was your job after?

Lam: I continued to work in so-called political action work. I

Lam: remained in that field of work. There was a petition campaign for the Stockholm Peace movement. I got involved in that because that also involved the development of coalition activities. I was involved in general party activities that took in more than strictly political action.

Ken: Let's get into the McCarthy period then, although that is a little bit later.

Lam: The beginnings were there. From the beginnings of cold war really, even before the Progressive Party campaign, there were already all kinds steps taken, laws passed, and so on.

Ken: Were you cognizant of this?

Lam: Oh yes. Because the House UnAmerican activities committee was carrying on its stuff, and the Hollywood blacklist was in effect. There were general blacklists. I think the first big thing that happened was the list that was set up by the Department of Justice or organizations, you know.

Ken: You mean the Attorney General's list?

Lam: Yes.

Ken: Let's get into the McCarthy period when your husband was arrested. How was he arrested?

Lam: Before we get into that I think I should get into the actual flavor of the McCarthy period out of which the Smith Act cases arose.

Ken: As it affected you?

Lam: Yes. It affected all of us because it had a very profound affect on everybody in the communist party. It had also a very profound affect on wider circles and on American life in general.

News of harassment, trials, hearings, firings, and so forth was in the newspapers all the time. It was a highly virulent campaign, always present. Only now it became more virulent than ever.

After the Wallace debacle the offensive against his supporters intensified and the offensive against the communists became very great. Laws specifically against the communist party began to be passed, or applied. The CIO expelled all of the left led unions from the CIO at this time. The whole period was very aptly described by Cedric Belfrage as the "Period of the American Inquisition."

Lam: Some of the victims of McCarthyism, the outstanding ones, the first that unfolded, were (I am going to give you the names) Hiss, Lattimore, W.E.B. DuBois, Rosenbergs, Steve Nelson, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, Alexander Meikeljohn, Linus Pauling, Charlie Chaplin, Paul Robeson, all of the Hollywood people, and countless others, most of them not communists at all.

There were some suicides. But more than just the destruction of lives, there were livelihoods destroyed, reputations, homes, and so on. Just the fact of having left wing books was considered evidence of subversion.

As far as the communists were concerned, in 1940 the Smith Act was enacted. The Smith Act is a very long law and has all sorts of segments to it. I'll quote only the first one, because otherwise we'll fill up the whole tape: "...to knowingly or wilfully advocate, abet, advise or teach the duty, necessity, desirability or propriety of overthrowing any government in the United States by force and violence." Now that was enacted in 1940.

In 1949 or so the first arrests of communists were made under the Smith Act. Members of the national committee were arrested under the Smith Act.

In 1951 the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Smith Act, confirming the conviction of the eleven national committee communist leaders. So in 1951 you might say the peak point was reached.

Prior to that (not to get ahead of myself), in 1950 they passed the McCarran Act which required registration of the party and its members. Even though this act didn't say that party membership was unlawful, it had the effect of making the party illegal. It also provided compound punishment for each day of failure to register. So if the party didn't register its membership on one day, it was held liable, and for each successive day that it did not register it would be held liable. Since the party did not comply with this, the law, if applied to the fullest, would have rendered the legal existence of the party virtually impossible. That was in 1950.

However, the party had already prior to that decided in taking certain steps to protect itself. During the period from 1947 to 1951 practically the only party activity was to defend itself against all of the heresy tribunals and the laws that were enacted during that period. There was an atmosphere over that period of time

Lam: of continuous harassment. If it wasn't the party directly, it was close allies of the party, people who were active in progressive movements or progressive circles who were being tried, and so on.

All coalition activity was directed in defense of people like the Rosenbergs, or the Hollywood Ten, as examples.

The analysis of the party leadership then was that certain steps had to be taken to protect the party, especially since it became apparent that, with the Smith Act being applied, the first eleven leaders having been arrested, then the next phalanx of leaders having been indicted ("second stringers", as they were called), there was the threat that each successive new group of leaders at the national level would be arrested under the Smith Act. Two committees had already been arrested or indicted when, in 1951, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Smith Act. (That was on June 4th, 1951). On June 14th, 1951, the party issued a statement nationally which said that "this decision makes for a fundamental change in the American way of life. Our country now stands on the edge of a preceps." The statement talked about "creeping fascism". In other words, the analysis of the leadership was that McCarthyism, compounded by this decision of the Supreme Court, represented the eleventh hour before fascism in the United States. At this point the party was actually saying that fascism was inevitable.

The preparatory period for meeting the situation started much earlier. At the point where it was felt fascism was inevitable, there were already nine communist leaders in prison and one hundred and eleven more on trial as indicted. The twelve California people were arrested in 1951, including Rudie.

Ken: How did you react to the arrests of the national committee?

Lam: Like everybody else, I was very concerned about it. In California we had a slightly different approach than in the national center. We had a feeling that they were exaggerating the imminence of fascism; that it was too sweeping an analysis. The National committee sent a representative to California in 1949 urging for the set-up of a reserve leadership to be placed underground, to designate certain people who would be held in reserve to become leadership should the existing leadership

Lam: of the party be arrested under the Smith Act. In discussing this, we did not quite go along with that at the time. I believe this was sometime in 1949.

Ken: You discussed this in the policy boards of the party. If you didn't go along with it, what happened then?

Lam: Nothing happened because the national committee was up to its ears in its defense of itself and actually a kind of a debate developed. But not sufficient to reach the surface. There was a period of which I became aware later, of very sharp debate within the national committee about this evaluation of fascism being inevitable in the United States. There was apparently disagreement in the national committee on this.

Ken: One question - people jumped bail at this time, or was it before?

Lam: That happened when the Supreme Court decision on the constitutionality of the Smith Act was made, June of 1951.

Ken: We'll get to that later then. Did you think, when this decision was made by the national committee, in any way how it would affect you?

Lam: I had already been affected by the whole thing because I was chosen to serve in the national reserve in the fall of 1950 and the Supreme Court decision didn't come until June 4, 1951.

Ken: Can we go into that now, then? This I am anxious to hear about. How were you chosen?

Lam: My selection took place prior to the period when the Supreme Court decision was made. This was in the fall of 1950 sometime before the analysis of fascism being imminent was made. The first eleven Smith Act victims had to surrender, after the Supreme Court decision, to to serve their terms. They had been found guilty for violation of the Smith Act and sentenced. It was at that point that all but four did surrender.

Ken: Were those four selected?

Lam: It seems it was a matter of decision of the individual. This grew out of the fact that there was a sharp disagreement in the national committee as to what the reaction should be to the Supreme Court decision.

Lam: Was it fascism? Were we on the eve of fascism, or were we not? As I said, I was not aware of the fact that there was a disagreement within the national committee until much later. I understand that the ones who remained out, who did not surrender, were people who chose not to surrender. They were not appointed or assigned to do so by the committee.

I was co-opted to a national reserve committee as my party assignment. I think I should say a few words about this question of reserve leadership and underground organization because it is open to all sorts of misinterpretations. One of the things that was said at the time was that leaders who were not in jail went into hiding, which is not quite accurate. They didn't go into hiding. Leaders who were not in jail were unavailable for open activities (which is the description we used) with a specific assignment in the reserve leadership. It wasn't a matter of just hiding.

Another description was that it was a "clandestine apparatus". Where "clandestine" means secret, of course, it also implies some illicit purpose. The purpose of the reserve leadership underground was to guarantee leadership for the party under all conditions. The Smith Act charged that the party advocated the violent, forceful overthrow of the government, an illicit purpose. To describe the reserve committee and its supporting underground organization as a "clandestine apparatus" implied that it was a secret "apparatus" for an "illicit purpose", such as charged by the Smith Act as noted previously. Insofar as the reserve leadership is understood to have the same aims and purposes as the whole organization itself, nothing illicit was involved. The "advocation of the overthrow of the government by force and violence" had never been part of the party's program. That charge was based on the Big Lie around which the whole anti-communist campaign was carried out. "Clandestine apparatus" was therefore also an inaccurate description. We called it an underground organization.

The people who were involved changed their identities. They were given responsibilities. In a very, very distant sense it could be compared to other underground movements that took place in the same historical period, though with very, very big differences. One is the underground in Germany under Hitler which was, of course, far different. Germany had fascism of the worst kind. The underground there included all "anti-fascists" who felt compelled to resist fascism in their country, whose courage was met countless times with elimination by torture and death. Or, let us compare it with France under the German

Lam: occupation. The French resistance was also underground. There you have a gamut of inclusion of people from De Gaulle all the way to the left of the communists, and a very broad and rather more open form of organization. These are the things that took place during World War II. But our underground was strictly for the protection of the communist party itself, and was a means of preserving some measure of leadership which should function in the event of the total illegalization of the party in the event of the Smith Act being used against one layer of leadership after another.

When I was asked to come into the center for this work, I was called in by the national office. The first question they asked me was, "Do you have a family?" I said, "Yes, I do have a family. However I don't have children." And this was of course the decisive thing. I didn't have children. They wanted to have a national reserve committee. Remember, this is the fall of 1950, some time before the really critical turn of events took place. They wanted to have a committee that would be representative of all segments of the party. So they had a white man, a black man and myself. We were the reserve committee that time. We were put on ice, so to speak.

Ken: Did you go to New York for this?

Lam: I went to New York. I was allowed to come back to California to make the changes here and then to report back. Decisions of this kind were not made generally known. We were urged not to make it known in the interest of security.

Ken: How did they ask you to do this? Did they ask you, or did they tell you?

Lam: They told me.

Ken: What did you feel about this?

Lam: I didn't want to do it, and I hoped that my district would fight against it, but that did not happen.

Ken: Did you tell anyone you didn't want to do it?

Lam: Yes, and there was an implication that this is your assignment; if you don't, under party discipline, we will have to take action against you.

Ken: What was the implication?

Lam: Well, the implication was removal from leadership, or even expulsion. I mean this was the way I could take it. I could not have tolerated that at the time. Quite aside from that, I didn't appreciate that this could develop into a long range proposition. To my mind the fascist danger was not as imminent as it was in theirs. But this was not something that we discussed at the time. I just thought, well OK, I will go into this assignment. It will be for a short while, and then I will be free again and go back to California.

Ken: Did they indicate to you how you would function?

Lam: Not at that point. At first our only function was to sit tight. Much later the problem of functioning took on dimensions of another kind. Much was left to our own ingenuity, as a matter of fact, as to how to function in those early days.

Ken: When you went back to California, did you tell the people in California you didn't want to function?

Lam: Yes. I discussed it with Bill Schneiderman. But he felt we had no alternative. I don't know whether there would have been any alternative if there had been a big fight made. I followed in choice another woman who had a child, and who just couldn't tolerate the assignment because of worry for her child. It got to be a very critical situation and they had to release her from that assignment.

Lam: Was she also told she had to do it?

Ken: Yes, in fact, she is still in the party. She was also very disciplined, very loyal, very dedicated, and so on. And I think that factor played a big role with all of us - that we were loyal and dedicated and we were defending our organization which was under fire, and anything that we could do would be important and all to the good.

Ken: How did your husband feel about this? Did you discuss it with him?

Lam: Of course we had a discussion about it, and he didn't like it. But, like me, he felt that if this was it we had to go through with it. I don't think either of us in any sense realized what was coming in the way of arrests and imprisonment of party leaders. We were aware the party was under attack, but that didn't mean fascism to us, or imply the need for such elaborate preparations.

Ken: How long was it, or rather what happened when you came back here? Did you continue your work in the party?

Lam: I was called in to New York and told that I had this assignment, and told that I had to come right back. So there was no more work in California. I just wound up affairs and went back in a few days.

Ken: What did you tell people?

Lam: There was nothing told to people. When they asked, I was just unavailable. I think a lot of people drew conclusions.

Ken: Were you the only person from California?

Lam: At that point, yes. Later there was another person brought into the center.

Ken: When you went back to New York, then, what happened.

Lam: There we were - the three of us -

Ken: Oh, did you pack a lot of clothes?

Lam: No. I learned how to travel with one suitcase, with very little. It was early fall. I was not prepared for a New York winter.

Actually, when we finally got settled, it was not in New York. It was on the Atlantic seaboard. We had to work out ways for ourselves of functioning. Our main responsibility in the early period was to get ourselves established under changed identities, and to hold tight. We had almost no communication with anybody on the outside, with the national committee.

We had some people working with us in the party's ranks who found people who were going to work with us in this assignment. Gradually an underground organization was developed by bringing into it people of various kinds, couples or individuals who did the same thing - moved away from their homes. Broke off their relationships with the party, and their families, and changed their identities, which was not very difficult to do. I mean you just changed your name, and that's it. Most of them got jobs.

I had a political responsibility, and therefore I did not get a job. But I lived with a couple in whose case the husband got a job. The couples that came out and worked with us were largely supportive in the activity they carried out. We did not call them "couriers" or "messengers", or resort to that kind of thing. We

Lam: maintained a certain amount of communication with each other because people lived in different cities, and we established gradually a committee formation which enabled us to have political discussion - not by gatherings or meetings, but mainly between individuals.

We were finally placed in a position of being a consultative body on policy so that if we did have to function as the leadership at any point we would not be unprepared for whatever the political line or tasks were before the party.

Ken: Now, you were accepted by the national committee and you were the only three in the United States?

Lam: We were the only three at the beginning. Every state had its own set up after a while. By 1951 actually every state had set up reserve committees. So did California.

Ken: And they functioned in their own states, and didn't leave their states to go somewhere else?

Lam: Yes. They stayed and functioned there.

Ken: And these people around you, did you select them, or were they selected by the national committee?

Lam: They were selected by people who were assigned by the national committee for that purpose alone, from the ranks of the party. The majority of them came not from the West Coast at all because it was too far away, but from the areas along the Atlantic Coast and as far west probably as Chicago. They were specifically chosen for this national reserve grouping.

In the end we had several hundred people in our set-up. We had to work out a gradual structure which was based not only on our concepts of what we needed in terms of an organizational set up, but also on what we could get because we couldn't always get all the people we wanted. We might say to this committee which was recruiting people for the work of the reserve leadership, we might say we need five, or we need ten, or we need so many. Well, we might get two. We always got less than we felt we needed. The result was that we always had to make adjustments in our plans and the way we operated.

One of our biggest problems was that we wanted to prepare the people; we wanted to ourselves be aware of the methods of the FBI in trying to ferret out or in trying to penetrate an organization like this reserve leadership group.

Lam:

We got some awfully crazy advice from somebody in the national office. They gave us a book to read on the Russian underground, which was just utterly beyond - Well, here by good California sense came forth, and we did not use it. But this book was supposed to be used for people to read and to observe the methods that were used by the Russians when they had their underground! You know, immediately after the revolution or before the revolution, or sometime like that! The book was sold in our bookshops.

Another thing which we were given as an example to study was the underground railway during the period of the abolitionist struggle prior to and during the civil war. Well, that was not totally applicable to us, but in some respects would have been a very fine thing if there had been fascism in the United States and we were actually in coalition with a lot of other people in developing resistance against fascism. But this was not so. We were a very narrow little grouping that was there expressly for the purpose of developing and holding a reserve leadership that could step into the leadership should the party actually become totally outlawed.

Ken:

What did you need these other people for?

Lam:

We needed them first to live with, so we had living accommodations. There were people who would transport us, those of us who were on the reserve committee. They had cars with which to do this. I never had a car for my use. I refused to use a car because if you were using a car, and with any penetration by the FBI, you are a goner. I mean, so they have a license number and you were finished.

Though I never used a car I traveled a great deal because I was responsible for political communication between the members of the committee, and their security. In other words, that means their protection from penetration from the outside, which meant that I had to personally make a study of the methods the FBI used as best I could from sources that were mostly unavailable, you might say. I had to try to put together in my own mind the things one might do under certain circumstances. We worked out a lot of ways to protect ourselves,

Lam: some of which sound very foolish and very funny, and were funny because we had a great deal of laughter about them.

One method was what we called dry cleaning. If you were going to take somebody to meet a member of the committee you wanted to be sure that the person was followed. So you would go through a whole procedure of driving into areas of the city where you would try to be completely alone to determine whether you were followed. Of you would take the person to the party of the city where, say, there would be a long flight of stairs. You would let that person off at the top of the stairs and they would go walking down and get to another car at the other end so that you would break the contact if there were one. The subways were very useful and, in big cities like New York and Chicago, the elevated. You could manage to be on the elevated in Chicago and finally get to be all alone where nobody else would be there. You just would stay on it until it got to the end. Or you got off somewhere where nobody else got off, and would then get on the subway going in the other direction, and so on. Hours and hours were consumed in this dry cleaning process to make sure that you were not followed. And we insisted on everybody doing that even though we were virtually sure that we had the organization pretty well insulated, and we were virtually sure that we didn't have a chance penetration, though it did come at some later point to a segment of the organization.

We didn't do things very fast. For instance, if you were going to have a meeting with somebody you set it off by two weeks, or three weeks, or four weeks. I remember once a meeting being set up for me to meet with somebody else, and the meeting was set up by still a third person who told us to meet at a certain town at the railway station at such and such a time on such and such a date. Well, we both went there and what wasn't known was that there was a railway station at each end of this town. So this woman was in one railroad station, and I was in the other. We never met each other. So we had to get a message back to the original person who arranged the meeting for us. Having made this discovery, we added this to a list of things you have to watch out for - for complete accuracy as to where you were going to meet.

It took another whole month before this meeting actually took place. Fortunately we were not in a activity. We weren't trying to lead anybody. We weren't doing anything that had to be productive. Otherwise you couldn't have the luxury of using that much time to get together.

Ken: Did you have any connection with the aboveground national leadership?

Lam: We had an intermediary group that was also out of circulation; that functioned exactly the way we did with the same kind of set up. But it was an intermediary between us and the open leadership, and was also a consultative body. This intermediary group would consult with the reserve committee on policy, on program, on all kinds of questions, and then would transmit their thoughts back to the open.

There was one vulnerable possibility of penetrating, namely the connection between the open and the intermediary group. Much to their credit, I think only once or twice did they become aware of one of their members in the Midwest being followed, and he was followed all the way to New York. He just broke off from the organization which was the only thing to do.

Where we might suspect that there was some kind of penetration we would just cut away that part of the organization and say "go home".

At one point, when the California arrests took place, we actually had to make a complete move. Our committee didn't do anything for six months while we moved the whole set up to another part of the country.

Ken: I am trying to figure out - was there a dual leadership?

Lam: No. There was not a dual leadership. There were sometimes conflicting opinions. The national leadership, during those years, was on trial - (the third set of leading national committee people on trial under the Smith Act). Their trial went on at the same time the California trial went on. In that period there were conflicts in policy between California and the national office with regard to the policy to be used in the Smith Act case itself. California used a different policy than the Elizabeth

Lam: Gurley Flynn case did, but which I am not prepared to go into because I wasn't too close to that. But there was a difference of policy.

The open leadership was so completely involved in the defense of the party, of the work around the trials, that all other matters were in slow motion. So any consultation that took place on policy questions with regard to, let us say, trade union questions or long range programmatic questions, moved very slowly. This reserve group wasn't the center of authority.

I understand that in some states the reserve leadership set itself up as the center of authority, and was the center of leadership, and functioned from the underground. I think this was the problem in California where the whole leadership was on trial, and the reserve leadership was trying to give leadership to the party from its position. This caused a certain amount of conflict and a lot of misunderstanding over a great many questions. Still the basic thing the party was involved in, no matter where they stood, was the defense of the party and the defense of its leadership so that the degree of activity that was carried on was always around those questions and not much else.

Ken: How did you get money to function?

Lam: We were financially supported by the national committee.

Ken: Your work was specifically what?

Lam: Let me say first that I was responsible for the organization itself, for the whole structure of the supporting organization to the committee. There was the committee which had some seven or eight members on it. Then there was this supporting organization of people who were used as intermediaries to carry messages, to help transport, and whose homes were used for overnight guests, and so on.

Then we had people who were responsible for the finances. We had a considerable structure - some two hundred people broken up into areas of responsibility.

Ken: Was this just in your area?

Lam: It was in my area of responsibility for the national reserve.

Ken: So you were in charge of the national committee reserve. These seven people would have become the national committee?

Lam: I was responsible for the supporting underground organization.

Ken: And would you have been a member of the national committee?

Lam: Yes, after a battle.

Ken: Well, tell me about that.

Lam: I think I should finish on the assignment. I was also responsible for their security, for the political communication between all of them (because they couldn't meet) and for the organization. My main aim all the way through, and this was something that I set for myself, was to keep it as simple in structure as possible, as defensive as possible, as far as protection and security were concerned, which required a constant review of everything we did - a continuous review.

It was an organizational, technical job that I was doing. These things I have described to you are organizational and technical.

I felt that being the only woman in this reserve group I should be drawn into the political aspects of the work of that committee. So this is where I raised my voice and said I didn't want to continue to function in this way. I was doing best I could on the job, but I felt that I had had political responsibilities in the State of California as part of the political leadership. I could not see that I was being given political responsibilities beyond transmitting opinions of individual committee members and back again. True this was a difficult enough task to carry out. There was always a problem of misunderstanding a person's point of view, and then transmitting what was your viewpoint instead of his. So I had problems of politically understanding what they were trying to transmit to each other - transmitting it correctly and bringing back the correct answer too. They agreed that I was right, and added me as a regular member of this reserve committee. That happened about half way through the assignment.

Ken: Didn't the involvement of these people sort of decimate the party?

Lam: No, not actually.

Ken: Were some of these two hundred people still above ground?

Lam: Some of them were. Yes. The party in New York was, after all, pretty big and had resources to draw from. I am not familiar at all with the statistics about membership during those years. But I don't think it made such a big bite in the membership - not there, because they had thousands of members.

The people that came into our reserve organization were not all selected from one place. They came from a wide area. The Atlantic Seaboard is almost a continuous city anyway. So when you talk about New York, there is a great periphery with lots of people.

I think some of our problems - some of the problems we had which were difficult of solution - were - well, if somebody got sick, particularly of the national committee people, it would be very difficult to get medical assistance for them. Once or twice we had such a problem. We were able to solve it with the help of the people we had around us.

Other problems were the problems of normal life, you know, social life, friendships, cultural activities, exercise, things like this.

Some of the people were not able to leave their homes at all. They had to stay in all the time. So we even worked out things like that, and exchanged information on it, and so on.

The social activity between the people became almost as important as the political activity because it was a very abnormal way of living, isolated and separated. For those of us who could move around, it was a great education.

I got to know the United States, at least in a superficial way. I traveled a great deal because it was necessary to keep my ties with everybody.

- Ken: The seven people weren't all on the Atlantic Seaboard?
- Lam: No. We didn't go much West of Chicago though.
- Ken: Let me stop here. When you first started this, how did you feel - your whole break with your other life. Tell me a little bit about how you personally felt about it.
- Lam: At first it was very difficult because during the first year we didn't know how long we would be in this situation. We didn't know what was going to happen. We didn't know what we were supposed to do. In the middle of it the McCarran Act was passed. One of the implications of that act was definitely the illegalization of the party. But the situation never developed that way because they finally never insisted upon the daily registration of membership. At that time, however, you couldn't tell. It looked like it could go on for many, many years, or a short time. So it was a very difficult period.
- I was completely on my own while they were attempting to find others to assign to this work. During that time it was winter and I had a very hard time with the winter weather. Our financial support didn't take into consideration clothing. I got so much a week and that was it, and I could barely live on that. So I invested in a cashmere sweater to wear underneath my California coat, and I never took that sweater off! I gradually developed a wardrobe, one for winter and one for summer, as everybody on the East Coast does. You have to have summer clothes; the summers are unbearably hot.
- The seasons, however, were fascinating to me. This is why I say it was an education. I found the seasons extremely interesting. The only one I didn't like was summer. But the Fall, the Winter and the Spring were really something for a Californian to experience. Also I got to know the United States and realized there was more to it than San Francisco, and how provincial I really was.

Lam: Learning the country, the geography, the superficial aspects of it, how to travel around it, and so on.

But, as I mentioned earlier, there were problems of social and cultural life, friendships and relationships. Some very intimate relationships developed. There was nothing you could do about it. It was one of those things that go on.

As far as social life was concerned, we finally worked out some ways we could get together in smaller groups. I remember one Thanksgiving we had two couples who each had a little boy. They were pre-school children. Six adults, including the two couples, another woman and myself, and these two little boys, got permission to have Thanksgiving together.

Ken: Who did you have to get permission from?

Lam: From our committee, because we were generally not visiting each other except where only one person was involved. So that was a great event. We really enjoyed it. We had music, a great Thanksgiving dinner, which we all participated in preparing, dancing and everything. It was very nice. In other words we appreciated friendships in the underground. I have friendships which have gone on to this day. It is almost like being in the army. You develop friends with whom you become close, closer than you would with your own family. One of the little boys, who was a pre-school child in those days, is now a grown man and he frequently visits me. He looked me up when he got to be sixteen years old. One day, there he is at the door, and I recognized him immediately. These friendships contributed to the positive aspects of the whole experience.

Culturally we went in for music, literature, exchanging records, exchanging books. Exercises were developed - ping pong and other forms of exercise, and we would tell each other about it.

If one family succeeded in cooking something that was a success, it was carried over to others so that they would be able to enjoy it too. One time someone made some chile con carne so good that they made jars and jars of it. So these things were taken around to everybody else to enjoy.

Ken: Then, during this period, you really had more leisure time than you ever had before?

Lam: I had a great deal of leisure time.

Ken: How did you get your reading material?

Lam: That was easy enough. We bought books. We stayed away from the libraries in general. There were areas you just had to stay away from, like the Yankee Stadium for instance, placed where you might be seen. But as far as party literature was concerned it was brought to us through channels we had set up for communication.

Ken: Did you ever see your husband?

Lam: Yes. That was arranged on two occasions. He was dry cleaned so he could see me. We met in California, but under conditions of safety.

When the Smith Act victims were found guilty we thought he was going to jail, so a visit between us was allowed. The first time I saw him was very near the beginning, but the second time was maybe a year or a year and a half before I was finally released.

Ken: How did you feel about being away from him all this time?

Lam: Very badly. It was a very bad time for both of us. I think that we were never really able to heal the breach of that period because our lives had taken such different paths. We felt this very sharply when they won their case. I got back to California in October, 1955, before the announcement came that the Supreme Court was going to review their case. They won their case in 1957, on June 17th, 1957. The Supreme Court remanded the case back to the lower court, giving the government the option to try them again, which was never done.

The victory celebration underscored for me how different my experience had been from Rudie's during the intervening years.

Ken: Did other women discuss their problems with you in this respect.? Did you have much contact with other women?

Lam: I had contact with one other woman on a rather steady basis, and we still have a very good friendship. She wasn't married, so this was not a

Lam: problem in her life. Most of the people I had contact with were couples, except for the members of the committee. They were all men, and they were alone, of course. They had families at home. The only kind of problems that seemed to come my way was some of the couples had problems with each other which they would discuss with me.

Ken: You mean as a result of living the way they did?

Lam: Partially, but I think partially also because they were young couples. One young couple had just gotten married shortly before they joined this whole situation. They wanted a baby, and this question came up for discussion.

Ken: What happened?

Lam: They didn't become pregnant while they were in the assignment, but as soon as they got out they had a boy, and they named him Rudie!

Ken: What was the discussion about? How did it take place? What was the decision?

Lam: They were trying to become pregnant, but did not succeed. I don't know why not. It may have been inhibitions which could develop under conditions like that. There was no objection to their becoming pregnant, none at all. But they had difficulty in her becoming pregnant, which later resolved itself.

Another couple had a conflict between husband and wife. It grew out of her feeling that she was just a housewife. I think she would have had the same beef against him outside of that assignment. That kind of thing came to my attention.

Ken: When you were living with this couple, what kind of a life did you have? Tell me what happened day to day.

Lam: Fortunately we had really wonderful people. They were not people who were big intellectuals or anything like that, or people who had held high leading positions in the party. They had positions maybe on a section level, or even club level, but they were really marvelous people.

I think I was extremely fortunate in having people in my group who were very creative themselves in working out the methods of dry cleaning, or self protection, and all of these things, and who were very courageous. I mean when it came to taking certain risks at certain times, they were prepared to do it. They were very dedicated people. Almost everybody in the set up was, you know.

Our lives were rather simple - stripped down. We had television. I even learned how to knit. We used to discuss the news and events that took place. We kept up with things as best we could. We read everything we got hold of. This was characteristic of everyone.

There was very high morale. We had no morale problems with anybody. I, for one, never got sick once during that entire period. I always used to feel that this was because I couldn't afford to get sick. If I got sick I would miss an appointment it would take months to re-establish. The only thing I did was sprain my ankle severely on the snow and ice one winter.

We had problems of ignorance by people who did some stupid things. Like one couple who was instructed to leave because we were afraid that there had been a penetration after the arrests in California. They had \$2,000 in reserve to hold for an emergency, which they should have returned to us. Instead of that, they got frightened and thought it might be marked money, so they tore it up and flushed it down the toilet.

Ken: Oh, no!

Lam: Well, this was just one of those things. They weren't in their home city, so when they did pick up and leave, instead of going back to their home city and establishing themselves there, they went to the party office in the city where they happened to be and reported that they had just been released from their underground assignment, and they wanted to know what they were supposed to do next. Nobody believed them, and the story eventually got back to us. And we could place them by the description. They were just not very imaginative. It was only one couple. However they had been cooperative. They carried out whatever they were told to do normally.

Ken: This couple you lived with - sometimes it is hard for three people to live together. Did you have any problem in that direction?

Lam: No. We didn't. They had the little boy, and I was sort of a built in baby sitter. He and I developed a very good friendship because I was a walker, and he liked that. So we were on Long Island Sound, and we used to go scrounging along the beaches there and found these little hermit crabs, and clams, and razorback clams. His parents accused me of making a nature freak out of him. They were from New York and had not had any experience in outdoor life. We had a very compatible relationship.

A lot of this has to do with the tone that is set by the leading people. If you act panicky, everybody acts panicky. So we kept an even coolness in the situation altogether. There was never an insoluble problem. We always found a way of solving things. We tried to do it collectively although the instructions were, "you give an order, that's it," and the next one does it, and so on down the line. I didn't quite agree with that. I felt frequently that if a person was told why we were carrying out a certain thing in a certain way it would be a lot better than if I said, "Now, you do this. You go there and pick up so and so and take him there." If they knew what was involved, how careful they had to be, and why, they did a better job.

Ken: In line with this, did you have, to your own knowledge, the information that the FBI or the police were after you? Were they looking for you?

Lam: They were. They were looking for me in California. The story had been given out that I was in a sanitarium, that I was ill. To the best of our knowledge every sanitarium in the State of California was checked. Rudie became aware of this. We heard all kinds of things.

My mother's sister-in-law has a daughter named Louise. And my mother and her sister-in-law used to have a great deal of conversation over the telephone with each other. My aunt told my mother she was going to see Louise, and the next day she was followed because they thought it was I she was talking about. So this aunt and her husband were put under surveillance. They went for a trip in the High Sierras. They were followed all the way.

Ken: The FBI had a nice time then?

Lam: Yes. So my family, of course, was continuously under surveillance. And Rudie was. Rudie spent a lot of time in jail while the trial was going on.

Ken: Well, how - if you were being followed, if you had been found, would you have been arrested under the Smith Act?

Lam: Yes, we all assumed that would have happened.

Ken: Did you have any rules of thumb about avoiding this, outside of the dry cleaning process? by not going into libraries or the Yankee Stadium?

Lam: The ones who had jumped bail didn't move around too much, remaining indoors. They could be recognized. I was not recognizable in the East and it was easy for me to move around. I think we just generally used common sense in not getting into situations where we would be in places where there might be big crowds, near places where there might be anything going on which would attract the FBI in any special way. We did not go out into the suburban areas, or the country. We felt that the best defense was to be in a big city, in a big urban community; that that was much better protection than to be off in a farmhouse somewhere. So we followed that concept generally. We didn't have to have a lot of rules outside of these special measures we took, I think because everyone used their heads. There were certain

Lam: There were certain efforts made at changing appearances. Some of the people grew mustaches. If it were the days when beards were grown, they would have had a very hard time anyway. Or some who never wore glasses wore glasses, and vice versa. But such efforts don't really pay off.

Ken: Were there wanted posters of you in post offices - or of anybody?

Lam: I don't think so.

Ken: Just the ones that jumped bail?

Lam: All those that jumped bail, yes.

Ken: Were those the main ones they were after?

Lam: They were among the ten most wanted for a period of time. Four of them were, anyway.

Ken: When you were underground you lived with a couple - the man was working - you lived in a community with them - What about the people you met in the community. You couldn't isolate yourself from a community?

Lam: No, you couldn't really. There were neighborly exchanges, and you got acquainted with your neighbors.

I was offered a job in one town where we were. I was offered a job with the City, of all things. Here I did go to the library because it wasn't the big New York Library. This woman knew of a job that was open somewhere in the city set-up, and offered me this job.

Ken: What did you do?

Lam: I told her no, that I was on a year's leave of absence - I was a teacher, and that I was having a sabbatical and wasn't looking for a job. Actually people thought I was a teacher. One bus driver was positive I was his son's teacher. Whenever he saw me he greeted me as his son's teacher.

Ken: Can you tell me what name you used, or does it matter now?

Lam: I don't think it matters one way or the other.

Ken: OK. Just picked a name and used it. You didn't register to vote or anything like that? Did you get mail in that name?

Lam: No. We never used the mails.

Ken: What kind of a job did the man have?

Lam: He got a job in whatever he could. He got a job in meat packing. It was usually a change of trade for them.

Ken: There are so many things to ask I don't know where to begin. I have a list a mile long - also at home. Did you have any social life with the people you met in the community?

Lam: Generally not. I don't recall that we had any social life. You know how it is in the cities. You know your neighbors, but you don't really get going out with them too much. We did things on our own. We went on picnics and things like that. Just the family. We tried to live as normal a life as possible.

There was one example, come to think of it, where the couple I lived with was invited to a New Year's Eve party, and they attended while I stayed home with the little boy. That was in the neighborhood. The people in the block got together. They had a nice time.

Ken: You mentioned in the course of the interview a time or two ago that when you went into the underground a whole new cultural life opened up for you, an exciting one. You want to tell a little bit about it?

Lam: Yes. I think the music was a big part of it. I always loved music, but I could listen to something and I couldn't tell you whether it was Beethoven or Sibelius, or who it was. But, while I was on this assignment, I listened to much music, both by recording and concerts. I became a more educated listener. From then on my interest in music has been really on a high level. This is not only classical music. I am very fond of jazz, and even some rock and roll. But in those days it was classical and jazz.

"Whenever I could I went to plays. But it wasn't always the advisable thing to do. Because you know how the theatres are - everybody goes. Movies was the same thing. I sometimes went to movies with this one woman that I worked with a lot who was secretary to the next group - the group between us and the open leadership. We went to movies, especially in summer because they were air conditioned.

The literature was another thing - the books. I began to read things that I never read before. I read a great deal. I have always been a heavy reader, but actually from that time onward I must say that my reading really took on great dimensions.

Ken: You talked a great deal about books you had read when I asked you about that before, and I couldn't see how you could have done all that when you were doing

Ken: party work. Now I see it was during that period.

Lam: That's right. A great deal of it was during this period.

Ken: Who taught you how to knit?

Lam: One of the women I lived with. We had lots of fun with that too.

Ken: Did you cook together?

Lam: Yes. Occasionally, and took turns. I washed dishes when she did the cooking. She was a very good cook. She was Spanish descent, but knew a great deal about Cuban cooking.

Ken: I don't know. It seems to me we got through this awfully fast, and there should be some more things about this period. Can you tell me about, say, some of your experiences? Did you have any close brushes?

Lam: Yes. One which helped bring about the decision to disband the reserve committee. I became aware of the fact that the FBI were awfully close to us after the California arrests of Bob Thompson and others. We were then in Chicago and I was having a meeting with two people. One of the people who was present at this meeting had had contact with somebody who had been in California. When that meeting broke up that evening, I left by bus. When I got to the place where I transferred to another bus line to get where I lived, I became suspicious of the way a car behind the bus stopped just as I got off. I decided to give myself a dry cleaning. So I took another bus and got off at a very busy intersection, grabbed a cab and told the cab to go somewhere. Sure enough it wasn't long before a car drove up beside the cab making every effort to look inside the cab to see me. It was so crassly done I realized my suspicions were correct. So I didn't go home at all. I had this cab driver drop me off at a hospital. It was late at night. I went into the hospital and I made a phony phone call; then I got another cab, went downtown, into the Loop, and checked into a hotel. The next day I went through a complete dry cleaning until I was all alone. It took me all day to know whether or not I was being followed. I got onto a subway, and it became very difficult, if they are in a car, unless they have somebody helping them.

Lam: I think they may very well have lost me at that point, but I didn't take it for granted. I realized that, since this was happening to me, it was an important danger signal. This was why we had to make the big move. I didn't keep the appointments I had after this incident. It was understood that if I didn't keep an appointment there might be a problem. I left the city and got in touch with the intermediary group in New York, and reported this incident to the person who headed this group. And we decided between us that we would move the whole organization away from the Midwest. Later we had some further confirmation that there had been questions asked of neighbors of one of our group. So we knew then that they were getting close to us and we could trace it to the California breakthrough.

Ken: How did you move?

Lam: Everybody moved on their own.

Ken: You broke up the whole thing. Did everybody go back aboveground then?

Lam: No. They re-established themselves. Each committee member had his own sub-set-up. They re-established somewhere else. It was a slow process, but it was done. No meetings were held. No contacts were made. Nobody saw each other for six months.

We had decided how to re-establish contact after a certain period, setting several dates for this purpose. However it was coming close to the time when the final disbanding of this whole operation was being considered because most of the Smith Act trials were either still in process or had taken place, and it was obvious that they were not going to apply the McCarran Act to its fullest extent. The whole idea of continuing this operation became a little farcical to everybody.

After a period of discussion and review it was finally decided to disband this committee and its organization. The dissolution of this underground set up came with the surrender of the people who had jumped bail. There were three who surrendered to go to jail, and then there were three who had to stand trial under outstanding indictments.

Ken: During this period, how did you feel about being underground all this time? Did you at any time have any misgivings?

Lam: Yes, I had misgivings about the whole meaning of it. I discussed it with one of the main guys, and he had misgivings too.

I also requested to be released several times. There was always some reason why I couldn't be released right then. I had periods of great personal dissatisfaction because it was lonely. It was a heavy responsibility, and was dragging on. I had questions about it, great doubts about the advisability of its going on like that, and I expressed those doubts. I can say a number of other people had the same feelings. It all started to come out. Finally, when it was decided to disband, then we moved very quickly.

Ken: You mean after the national committee was aware - Do you think anything was accomplished by this underground bit?

Lam: I don't - not actually. It was a reserve leadership, but it never had to operate because of the rapidly changing situation politically. The government did not continue the high intensity of their anti-communist vendetta. But a lot of damage was done. Families were involved. The wives and the children of the refugees, they had a much harder time of it. And children were harrassed by the FBI. There were very severe problems with the families outside. I think the men who were in this underground fared much better than the families, except for the ultimate prison terms they had to serve. In retrospect it is clear the whole project was extreme. Rather, the concept of reserve leadership grew out of a wrong political analysis heated up by the anti communist drive which clung for just too long a period.

Ken: Why was it an over reaction - this creeping fascism you mentioned?

Lam: If you understand that fascism is the ultimate way in which the ruling class holds power under capitalism, you realize the whole country is involved, the whole political superstructure is involved. Fascism is not just outlawing the communist party, and this is where the over reaction came in. The communist party and its periphery, all the progressives,

Lam: all the people who were victimized by McCarthyism, in themselves did not constitute the whole system. Fascism is a method of control when all other methods have failed and the ruling class has no other way of controlling the political and economic system. Whereas the American democratic system obviously was not moving toward fascism. I think that Cedric Belfrage's title of his book, The American Inquisition, is an extremely good description of the period of McCarthyism.

Ken: Personally, do you feel the oppressive measures of the government accomplished their aims?

Lam: Yes, they did.

Ken: In what way?

Lam: I think that the repressive measures furnished one of the objective reasons why the communist party sort of faded out. The party lost more than three fourths of its membership during that period. The aim of McCarthyism was to destroy the party. Under Hoover (who had for forty years tried already) the anti communist drive had great impact. It helped to destroy the party's influence in the trade union movement. Although there were also subjective reasons why the party became an irrelevant organization, under the heading of the objective reasons why the party became a shell of itself, was this period of McCarthyism and what was done to the party through the Smith Act, the McCarran Act, and all these other ways.

In addition the party's over-reaction made it impossible for the party to develop alliances in the trade union movement, or any kinds of coalitions. Additionally, the party broke off some of its coalition relationships in that period. There was a fear among people. They did not want to become embroiled in more harassment. That was also a big factor. The FBI, Hoover, McCarthy and Nixon took full advantage of going after this to the fullest extent.

The repressive measures did great damage to democratic rights of American people generally, not only the rights of progressive and left organizations.

Ken: I think that really covers the whole section. You know the questions I had, I think we really covered them in the course of your notes and the things I remember. The only thing is I sort of don't get the flavor of it. Somehow it's missing. I don't look

Ken: on it as excitement, but I don't get the feeling of life in it. Can you explain that?

La m: I don't know that I can explain.

Ken: It is a way of life that is so completely different that I don't have any feeling of it.

Lam: Yes. The only thing that made it tolerable and possible to go through it without morale crises was because the character of the people involved was of such a high level insofar as their behavior and convictions were concerned that the atmosphere was a healthy one. There were many funny things that happened. We had a lot of laughter too. But it's hard for me to describe exactly the essence of our experience.

We were in a little world of our own. We were homesick. All the guys were homesick. They all missed their families. I remember one of the men got information that his father died while we were together. This affected him very deeply. His father was old. His death was not unexpected. But you could see it was a great blow. The others were sympathetic and very supportive.

I don't know what it is like to be in a war, but I always make that comparison. You have your associations, and you give a certain amount of strength to each other by the way in which you react to developments. This work was not exciting. It was rather time consuming and pedestrian.

There was always the feeling of caution, of being careful. We had to be very observant. We had to learn how to take advantage of periods for recreation and entertainment, exercise and so on. So usually our times together, even though they were for political meetings, exchange of political information, usually also were social events - even if there were only three or four people together. As soon as we saw someone else or met with several other people we could go on talking and exchanging views on all sorts of questions for hours.

We had one or two people who were great joke tellers. Whenever we got together with them we had a lot of fun. After all the people on the reserve committee were among the most developed Marxists in the leadership - the "best" we had, whatever I may think of them now.

Ken: Well, I think we had better close for the day.

Ken:

To preface this tape, both Louise and I were dissatisfied with the nature of the last interview. We felt it was a little scattered. Our excuse is that neither of us felt very well that day. So we figured out an encapsulated version of what happened, just on the basis of the interview, so it could be carried on further. Louise will proceed now to give this capsule version of how the underground functioned, and how she got involved.

Lam:

I want, first of all, to clarify the time that this took place. I was originally assigned to a national reserve committee in the fall of 1950, sometime prior to the initiation of the Smith Act cases and the arrests that resulted in all the Smith Act cases on a national scale.

At that point my responsibility was to be one member of a group of three who were to be the nucleus of a national reserve leadership, which would gradually be built up as and if the events showed that we would need such a committee.

The first year of my service in the underground was virtually on ice. We did not have any responsibilities at all, except to maintain contact with each other.

We were furnished with, in each instance, a couple of people (a couple usually) who set up living quarters (who had changed their identity and gotten jobs of their own) with whom we lived individually. We each had such a set up. This was all that it amounted to in the first year. We had no contact at all with the national committee of anyone in the party.

It wasn't until the end of 1950 or early 1951 that attention began to be directed toward developing a larger group in the so-called underground organization. This, at that moment, to include people who would move away from their homes, change their identities, establish homes and jobs in other cities or other areas, and begin to work and get themselves established under these identities. We were gradually to use these people for purposes of having meetings in their homes or as intermediaries in discussion between other members of the committee as the reserve committee would be built up gradually as well. We were still just the three members.

Lam:

Characteristically, this committee of three members was supposed to represent the composition of the party membership. It had on it one white man, one black man, and one woman. So this was the kernel of the reserve committee.

When the first Smith Act defendants were convicted (you know, the members of the national committee), it was necessary for them to surrender to go to jail and serve their terms.

At some point the decision was made, by the national committee apparently, that the defendants could, on their own, decide whether or not they would choose to function in the party as reserve leadership, in other words not surrender, jump bail, and function in a reserve leadership rather than going to jail and serving their time. I don't know to what extent the discussions in the national committee determined who would go or who would not. My understanding afterwards was that they more or less went on the basis of who would be willing to do this.

Of the first eleven, there were four (if I remember correctly) who decided they would serve in a reserve leadership in an underground set up.

When that point came, the national committee decided to transform the committee that I was working with. It was at that point that I was assigned to the responsibility of working with a reserve committee which was made up of these defendants who did not surrender, and several other people.

There was a second group of Smith Act indictes who were added to this so that there were altogether seven or eight people who ended up in this assignment. It was at that point, as I indicated, that I was made responsible for organizing the apparatus for contact between and among them for political consultation, for generally transmitting to each other their political viewpoints. They were not to be an active committee. They were to be a committee strictly held in reserve and be in a consultative capacity to the above ground leadership, which was still involved in trials. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's trial was going on at that time.

There was another group who were also taken out of the open leadership and placed in an underground position, who were intermediary between the group I was responsible for, and had contact with the above ground organization. This group was far more

Lam: active in policy determination because they were in much more direct contact with the above ground organization. But with the leaders of that group we had a certain amount of relationship which we had to be very active in protecting. I was in the position of being intermediary between the deep reserve and this second group.

Ken: May I ask a question here? Your group was the reserve national committee. The group between you and the above ground, were they also a national committee?

Lam: They were part of the national set-up. I think you could say they were part of the national organizational set up. The main people were members of the national committee.

Ken: Then the national reserve committee was divided into two, part intermediary, part deep reserve?

Lam: That was a difficult responsibility ~~by~~ the way, the intermediary one, because we had certain rules about our manner of handling things. The mails were never used. We had as little written down as possible. Much of what we transmitted to each other was done verbally, keeping very small notes and getting rid of them as quickly as possible.

Our contact between these two set ups was not very frequent. We probably had contact on the basis of twice a month, or once a month. There were times when we did try to get together some of the people in the group I was with, two or three at a time. And once or twice I think we had a situation where we did have a joint meeting with the leader of the intermediary group.

These meetings were all, however, consultation. The group I was with was not determining any policy. But there was an exchange of views on the line, on the question of program, which was broader and more encompassing than the question of the immediate tactics on the Smith Act trials.

Ken: Let me butt in here. I thought we wanted here to give sort of a capsule set up on how you operated, and then we will go into the development of the questions later.

Lam: As far as the number of people, it was a gradual building up. Probably the total we had involved when we were at our peak of organization was around 200 people.

However, all of these did not move from their homes or change their identities and get new jobs. Some, approximately 70, were people who remained

Lam: where they were, but separated themselves from their party clubs, or functioned in a limited capacity, doing some limited things for our organization. We had connection with them through someone else, a contact who was protected. Altogether, counting them, we had approximately 200 people involved.

The people who were underground were people whose function was to act as intermediaries, carry information, whose homes were to be used for the convenience of one or two people to stay overnight, and to help in transportation, if it were necessary. If somebody had to use a car, they would have a car to use, and so on.

On the buffer group between this underground one and the above committee, I have no idea as to the extent of their apparatus, how much of it was made up of people who had separated themselves and changed their identity. I think it was only a limited number.

Ken: You weren't responsible for them, then?

Lam: No. The only thing I was responsible for was contact with the chairman of that group. Beyond that I had no responsibility. They were a completely separate set up.

The entire apparatus was spread out between the Eastern part of the country along the Atlantic Seaboard to as far west as Chicago. By that, I mean everybody who had anything to do with the reserve committee was spread that far apart. I think to a large extent the other, the buffer group, was in a similar position, though they were a much smaller set up in general and much more mobile because they had to be. It was through them that the greatest danger existed in the FBI or somebody getting an avenue to us. This is why we had to narrow down the contact to only between two people, and that highly protected. In other words we protected it by our dry cleaning.

There was one member of the reserve committee whose set up was somewhat separate. He had his own security communication apparatus. My contact with him was also just through his political secretary. His organization was separate and apart although he was a member of the national reserve committee.

Ken: How did that happen?

Lam: I think this was by his own decision. Because he was at that time organizer of New York he had the greatest resources to call on, and he wanted to be sure for himself that he had a reliable organization. I am sure it was by his own decision.

Lam: We had no meetings at all between the members of the committee that I was working with and anybody in the aboveground party. We had no direct contact, no meetings with them at all - for the entire period I was on this assignment until October, 1955, when the committee was dissolved and I was released. We never had any such contact, which was in keeping with the character of the committee as not an active policy making committee.

We had no connection with any reserve committee that were set up in the States.

The state organizations did have reserve committees, some of which played a very active role in giving leadership to the party. We had no contact with them. We were not responsible for them. We did not direct their work.

This in a large sense simplified our operation very much because it was not in any sense an active center.

Ken: I see. I think that pretty well covers it then except that we don't know the end of it, after the six years. We can go into that later anyway.

Lam: Yes, I think so.

Ken: There were just a couple of questions I jotted down when you were talking. You said that you were going to be used in a different way after the Smith Act people had been arrested. What different way?

Lam: I was at first on the reserve committee of three. We actually disbanded when they decided to set up a committee to surround these seven people who had not surrendered. When they set that up, or decided to set it up, they looked at what they had in reserve, the three people and a certain number of people around them. It was a very small organization. They decided to disband that small reserve committee, assigning its members to other responsibilities. So really what I got was a new assignment. It was still underground.

Then I really had work to do. The first year there was nothing to do. There came this problem of the organization around the national committee people who had jumped bail.

Ken: you
The other question was - mentioned these people were in a consultative capacity? How did they consult with the buffer group if they never met, or did the buffer group meet with the national committee? I think you mentioned that briefly.

Lam: Yes, I think I did. The buffer group did not meet with the national committee. I think the chairman or one or another of the members would meet with a member of the national committee.

Now the national committee, as I indicated, was under Elizabeth Gurley Flynn at the time. I don't remember who else was in the leadership. But her trial was going on and they were very much concerned with policy of the trial, which was a day to day thing, and this intermediary group that was underground could not give day to day leadership. They didn't attempt to. It was on the questions of longer range policy questions where there was some relationship.

Ken: I see. Now I have a whole series of questions based on my typing the transcript and reading it actually, and I guess we can go into those. The first one is - when women were asked if they had families before being considered for underground work, what were the men asked? I mean, men had wives and children. Was this discussed with their families? Was there a different criterion for the men and women that went underground?

Lam: I think so, but I don't know to what extent. The people I worked with, most of them were couples who came out, except for the leading people. The leading people were either in jail or in this reserve leadership. Their families had to take what came, and it was very tough for them either way. If their husband went to jail or went into the reserve leadership, either way it was very tough because they were hounded by the FBI all the way through - and their children. It really was a very difficult period for those families.

I am aware, however, of one instance which shows a difference in how the women and the men were handled, and that was the case of a couple where the husband (a leading party person) was assigned to a responsibility in one of the underground groups. He refused to go unless his wife could go with them, and it was finally decided to let his wife go with him. Now that, in contrast to my situation, no one suggested that, "Well, your husband should go with you." It was reasonable to expect that they could very well have taken both of us into the work. But it never came up.

Ken: And with Rudie's experience?

Lam: It never came up at all. I felt from the outset when I heard about that case where he refused to go unless his wife came with him, if I had refused

Lam: to go unless my husband came with me it would never have been agreed to. I didn't want to do that assignment at all. Yet my objections made no difference at all. This was the assignment and you're going to do it. It was a veiled threat - if you don't it's a violation of discipline. So I feel that there were differences in the way things were handled.

Each of the reserve people had a few families around them who worked with them, with whom they lived, and so on. In some instances there were women involved in their set ups. They were always either single women or women, who, if they were married, had no children. This was always so.

Now we had another California woman who was brought into that intermediary group, the group that was between this deep reserve and the open national leadership. She didn't have a child at the beginning. She became pregnant during this assignment. I felt all along that one of the reasons she was originally chosen was because she didn't have a child. Of course she had the capacity to play a role in the leadership. This was certainly there, and it was usually there in all the cases. They were all experienced people. They had either been organizational secretaries, country or section organizers, or active in vital mass organizations. They had a rounded party experience. But I think there was a difference in the way women were selected for this work.

I found another difference - a small matter. But to me it was indicative of the methods of handling the men and the women in the apparatus. We were not permitted to have any mail or any contact with our homes and families. I could not write to Rudie or he to me. However they did agree that if, for instance, there was going to be a national committee meeting and somebody like Schneiderman was coming into the national center in person he could bring in a letter for me from my husband which would be transmitted to me by channels. Well, the letters I got from Rudie were ready by somebody in the national office to make sure that there was nothing in them that was in any way incriminating or revealing or what, I don't know what. And I am sure that my letters to him, which were infrequent but were transmitted in the same way, were also read. I became aware of this, that my letters were also read. I don't remember how. I discussed it with some of the other people who were getting mail from their families, and I asked if

Lam: their mail was being read by somebody in the national office. They said, "Of course not. This is personal." At which point I blew up. How did I know what they were doing with the letters? It would also mean that there were letters that I never got, which is very possible - a fact you just began to accept because you realized there was no point in taking chances on the delivery of things like this. They could fall into the wrong hands, or if somebody was followed and there was a breakthrough by the FBI we didn't want to have anything in writing.

Ken: How would the other people know whether the letters had been read or not?

Lam: I don't know. They just presumed.

Ken: You mentioned a little bit about this, but how did you live the first year you were on ice? Where did you live?

Lam: I lived with a couple who were assigned to be with me. They had a small child - a pre school child. I was ostensibly an aunt. They went with me into the new assignment. So did at least two or three other couples that we had set up and had not been active. They were just being held in reserve, and became active, in this limited sense of course, in this new set up after the first year.

Ken: Here's another question because it wasn't quite clear to me - You mentioned that people could very easily change their identity by simply changing their name. But what about people who went to work. They had to have social security numbers, drivers licenses. In our society today you just don't change your name and go to work.

Lam: It turned out to be fairly easy to get a social security number. You just made an application for it. Also in many states it is not illegal to change your name. So you make an application for social security and once you have a social security number you work just like anyone else. In fact I think there are many people who do this for different reasons because it isn't illegal to change your name. We found that there were very few problems actually of that nature providing they had jobs.

Lam: Once you had a job it was easy to get a drivers license, and you began to build up a small circle of references. The resourcefulness of these couples was tremendous because some of them learned new trades while they were in this assignment, and they were in it for five years. They learned new trades. They came out and were able to work in the new trades they had learned.

The real problem came when the children, who were mostly pre-school, (they weren't very many) got to the school age. Then there was the problem of birth certificates and things of this kind. These problems were circumvented either by releasing the people so they could send their child to school under their original names, or when they got home, they just kept the names they had adopted in the underground, which happened in a number of cases.

Ken: You said it was a problem about medical attention. If they changed their identities and had new names, why was this medical attention a problem.

Lam: It was a problem for only a few. I had to get a cyst on my eye removed. It was no problem. I just went into a doctor's office. It was a problem, however, for the people who had jumped bail. Fortunately, we didn't have too many instances of needing medical attention. But we did have a few, and it was a difficult problem to solve.

Ken: The next question is - when you had to disband a group and re-establish yourselves, what was the process you went through? Did you change your identities again?

We just moved the whole operation because, at that point, we recognized we were coming close to having to make a decision to get all new people to work with us or to disband the reserve completely. What we did in the interim was to move. The couples might be living in Chicago, so they moved to New York, or they moved somewhere in New Jersey or Connecticut.

Ken: Did they keep the same names?

Lam: Generally, we didn't have changes. If we perceived that there was some revelation of the fact that they had contact with this organization we released them immediately. I think I mentioned this last week - that there probably was penetration close to us. We were therefore very cautious. If we suspected there might have been some revealing of a person's connection

Lam: with any of this organization set up, we told them to go home. We released a number of couples before we had any confirmation that it was necessary. In many instances we never did get any confirmation. In one instance we did, because then we got information that the next door neighbor had been questioned by the FBI. And that information came around to us.

When we made the big move, after the California arrests in the Sierra, we took six months to do it, which meant that in those six months we had no contact between and among the members of the committee.

Ken: If you were penetrated, wouldn't they know the names of these people?

Lam: They might have. Yes. That is why we cut them out. We were never sure. You could never be sure, but they might have. We just went on the concept that they did have it when we made the cut offs. We made changes too. We changed the responsibility of individual people sometimes so that they would have what you might call a sabbatical from the work for six months where they didn't have anything to do and they could just watch to see if they were under surveillance.

It is possible to find out if you are under surveillance or not. We tried to imagine the ways in which surveillance would be carried out, and then try to figure out counter actions to that, or ways of revealing it if we suspected that it was going on. We were very conscious of this. This was not true, I think, of some of the other groups. And certainly it wasn't true of the people here in California. I was very happy I didn't have anything to do with that.

In any event we tried to foresee things. There were times when we would re-check everything that we had done in order to see that we had really taken the most protective measures. Still you always had this hanging over your head - that you might be very careful, but that didn't mean that the person you were meeting with was going to be equally as careful despite their protestations that they had been.

Ken: When people were sent home, when you cut off people and they went back to their original home, did the FBI get after them?

Lam: I don't know of any although it may have happened. You see, in cities like New York where most of these people came from, and Chicago, the movement is kind of diverse. People move around a lot. It is not

Lam: like a small town such as San Francisco, insular, and even provincial, where there is a lot of discussion going on in the movement as to who is where, and so on. It is not quite the same in a big urban set up like the Atlantic Seaboard.

Ken: There is one other question - you mentioned, in the course of the last interview, that there were a number of funny things that made all of you laugh. We never went into what funny things happened.

Lam: I'll see if I can think of any. When we get together we always remember things, but - I'll give you one example. This didn't happen directly to people I was working with. It is a story that came around to us. It happened in another set up. They had a system worked out where they had a regular meeting, I think once a month, with one of the individuals in their group. Their method of meeting was to meet in front of a certain big market in a neighborhood of the city they were in. Actually the guy had to travel from one city to another city to meet his contact in front of this market. The agreement was that if you went one time and your contact didn't show up, you would automatically go back a month later, figuring something had happened, in order to meet that person. Well, something had happened to the guy that had to come to this city, and he never showed up. The other man kept going back to that market once a month for more than a year. The contact had been broken off, and they had never made an arrangement as to what to do as an alternative. If nobody showed up, what would he do? He had no way of getting in touch with the other person. For a year he conscientiously kept going there every month to stand there for an hour or two in front of that market. Finally he came to the conclusion that there was not going to be any meeting, so he packed up and went home.

Incidents of that kind happened frequently. For instance, somebody set up a meeting for myself with one of the people in the intermediary group, the secretary of the chief guy. They picked out

Lam: the corner of two streets where there was a big cemetery. So we met at the corner of this big cemetery in the evening. Nothing else was there. There was no reason for two women to meet each other at a cemetery, and we got to laughing about that. We almost went into the cemetery to find a grave we could grieve over. We had to walk miles to get out of that area to a place where we could just sit down and have a cup of coffee. The location was chosen off a map without knowing what was there.

I told you of the time I was in one railroad station and the other person was in another in the same town at different ends of the city.

Most of the things were such slip ups that threw people off. Fortunately we didn't break connections with people because of these things. We had safeguards set up too so that through some other channel you could always re-establish contact. At least we tried to do that. Now this wasn't true of everybody.

There were efforts made by some of the people to change their appearance somewhat. I don't know whether I mentioned this.

Ken: Yes, you did - glasses and so forth.

Lam: One day I was walking with two men. They were not the top guys. These were people who functioned in the capacity of political secretaries. Both of them had grown mustaches. Those were the days when nobody was wearing beards and mustaches, which would have been a great boon. We were walking along the street talking. I was between them. And a man comes toward us, a man with a mustache. We were having some kind of discussion, but all three quieted down and looked at him. Then, when we passed him, one of the men said, "I wonder who he is." Because the man had a mustache we thought it was another effort to change his appearance. It didn't really change anything because the bone structure of a person's face is difficult to disguise.

Ken: What was a political secretary?

Lam: If I wanted to get some communication to one of the top guys of the committee, I didn't necessarily have to meet with him. I would meet with what was known as his political secretary who was an alter ego for him. In other words, the political secretary could have meetings with people like myself, or with the political secretary of another member of the committee. There was inter-communication between some of them. Political secretary meant that they were more than secretaries. They were involved in the political discussions so that they could transmit the thinking of the committee member on political questions.

Program was being discussed. The party has programs from time to time, and the whole organization will discuss a draft program which includes the party's longer range aims and objectives. During part of that time there was discussion about a program which, as I understand it, came out much later, not until I was out of the party altogether.

Sometime between 1958 and 1960 there was a draft program presented to the party for discussion and then final adoption at a national convention. But while we were in this assignment the question of such a program was already being discussed. In fact initial drafts were being prepared - sections of a program - for use of a committee that would ultimately draw up a draft program for discussion in the party.

These programmatic statements were only made from time to time when it was necessary to adjust the party's over all objectives to historical events, including the objective of socialism, it's position on the Negro question for example, or an analysis of where American capitalism stood, and so on. The necessity for such a program became obvious when it was clear that there wasn't going to be fascism in the United States - that this was a misapprehension or a mis-judgement on the part of the national committee, and that there was need for correction of a great many things. In fact, the conventions of the party in 1957, and then again several years later, attempted to make certain changes in the way the party functioned. The initiation of this started with the group that was in reserve

Lam: leadership. It was something, however, that could only be done when everybody was back in the national leadership, doing national work, where they belonged, and out in the open.

Ken: That was one of the questions. I wondered about that. You mentioned the number of people underground didn't really decimate the party, but how did you feel about the necessity for immobilizing all of these forces?

Lam: I think that has to be coupled with the question of how did I feel about the operation itself because two hundred people is not such a big immobilization. That number of people was not critical on a national scale. I think even on a state or district scale it was not critical. The fact that it tied up some of the leading people, and tied them up in knots, was ridiculous and a waste of time. I think that the whole operation turned out to be something of a farce. This is the only way I can talk about it. It is a miracle that people came out with as high a morale as they did. Again, it arose out of their convictions that the party came first. But I think the whole operation was unfortunate. It had its political roots in a political decision made by the party, and it had unfortunate ramifications for the people who were involved in it. It distorted their lives. In some instances it contributed to illnesses.

Long separations, like with Rudie and I, we were separated for over five years, which presented us with a problem later that was very difficult - to adjust to living together after that long period of time. There were lots of maladjustments, misplacements, things like that.

You can laugh about certain things now and say, well, it wasn't so bad, because usually in retrospect things are like that. The bad things you forget. But I think the important conclusion is that it was a wrong political decision, and it took a long time to correct it. Six years is a long time. Unfortunately, even after its correction, we had more things happen that revealed the great damage that was done by these sectarian and very dogmatic conclusions that the party had come to in that period.

Lambert

Ken: What more things?

Lam: Well, the Khrushchev revelations about Stalin, and then the struggle within the party in the national conventions in the period after everybody got back, and the effort to democratize the American party - to change its character so that it would not be such a sectarian organization.

This was not a successful struggle. We were on the verge of a great factional struggle within the party which would have developed if the people who got fed up with the whole thing hadn't gotten out of the party. It was among these. And those of us who had got out just decided that it wasn't worth a factional struggle - that the party was so isolated and sectarian nothing could be accomplished by remaining as members.

Ken: I guess the next question you really have already answered. It is about the political discussions and what happened. Were they theoretical or directed towards work? Actually, they were theoretical. My other question is the key to what happened there - Did you ever discuss or plan how you would work if fascism came? You were part of a national committee to function under fascism. Did you ever discuss what you would do when fascism came. Would you be the foundation of a new party, and what would happen to the aboveground party, and so on? And if you didn't discuss it, why didn't you?

Lam: We didn't discuss it in great detail. First of all, it was a very fluid kind of period. The national leadership was on trial. The whole California leadership was on trial. The Detroit leadership, I think, was on trial. It was a fluid situation to the extent that we didn't know, we could not say at any single moment, "now the party is going to be outlawed." That would have been the turning point. If the party had been outlawed and made into an illegal party, then we would have been faced with the question of how to function as an illegal party, not just a question of a reserve leadership, but how to function with this reserve leadership as an illegal party - recognizing at the time that the illegalization of the party would mean its shrinkage because people would have to get out. A lot of people had to support their families and so on, they could not remain party members and would get out.

The party membership was not going to be registered as demanded by the McCarran Act. The administration, the Department of Justice, and so on,

Lam: were also in a situation where they were under a sharp attack from the anti-McCarthy movement that developed from a broader basis than the party itself. There was a lot of reaction against McCarthyism, against the execution of the Rosenbergs, which came in the middle of this period for example. Around the Rosenberg case there was an international movement of such capacity that the American administration could not ignore the full meaning of this movement which was far beyond what the party would or could do.

The situation was very fluid. There developed a tacit understanding that we did not have fascism. That became clear very early. But there was hanging over our heads the possible illegalization of the party which could have placed all of us in a different relationship and might very well have continued the process of beheading the party every time a new leadership came into operation. This would have made it easier for the FBI to find the underground leadership if the party had to function in that way.

We had no discussions on this possibility. We had frequent exchange of opinion. Everyone had to recognize that changes were taking place. For instance, take the California case. They were defended on a different policy than the Elizabeth Gurley Flynn case. In California, Oleta's testimony was the presentation of the party's real position against the concept that the party stood for the overthrow of the government by force and violence. It was a matter of presenting the theory of Marxism and its application to the day to day life - a discussion of Marxism as applied to American life. Oleta's contribution in this respect was outstanding, even though you had to understand that it really could never be carried out in the United States. The party was in such an isolated position the American people were not for it. Unless you have the majority of the people you don't have it. The differences in policy between the Flynn defense and the California defense made some difference in how the people outside of the party also felt about it.

There was considerable mass support in Los Angeles around the Smith Act case which extended beyond the party periphery, and got a lot of

Lam: support from people who saw the inequities of this and who saw that the application of the Smith Act, the McCarran law, and so on, was part and parcel of the period of McCarthyism which lost its sting as time went on.

The conclusions finally to bring this underground set up to an end was very much influenced by the fact that there were political changes in the country that showed that there was not the same intensity of anti communist action by the administration that there had been before. In other words there were openings in going back to a fully legal operation.

Ken: I was just wondering because I figured you were underground because fascism was imminent, and what were you doing about it - and it seemed a contradiction if you didn't do anything about it.

Lam: It was a contradiction if you didn't do anything about it. It was one of those things. Fortunately we didn't try to do anything. It would have been ridiculous.

Ken: What I wondered about was if you hadn't established contact - I don't know about the states' set up, but if you hadn't established contact, how could you function as a national leadership if you had no damn contact? You were isolated, and the states were isolated.

Lam: It would have had to be established. We would have been faced with that necessity, and that would have presented us with some very huge problems - how to do it.

Ken: Yes. You wouldn't know where to begin. There is one little question here - the people who couldn't leave their residence were just the people who had jumped bail. You had mentioned certain people who couldn't be seen. Was it just those people? Those people on the ten most wanted list?

Lam: Yes.

Ken: Here is a question. I heard this discussed quite a bit during that period - Some people advanced the opinion that the Justice Department really knew where all these underground people were, and they left them there because it suited their purpose; because they knew, even better than the party, that if they made mass arrests of all you people all hell would have been raised. There were groups of people who would have raised hell - trade unionists, and it was better off to just leave you there as long as they knew where you were. What is your opinion of this analysis?

Lam: I don't think that's true. I don't think that's true at all. One thing that would prove that is the California case of those three who were arrested here in California, Bob Thompson, Sid Stein, and Carl Ross.

Ken: He (Bob Thompson) had jumped bail, hadn't he?

Lam: Yes, the FBI broke through on that. How they did it, I wouldn't know. It may have started in the Mid-West and was carried to California. I think that is proof of the fact that they did not know. They may have known in some of the districts where people were. If they had known where these people were they could have done the opposite of what is implied by this question. They could have made a big publicity thing out of it; one of those sensational stories about having caught up with one of the ten most wanted.

There is one other small fact. When the refugees did surrender, which they finally did, they walked in and surrendered. They were met with somewhat of a surprise. The authorities they surrendered to were surprised. They would not have been surprised if they had known. If they had known all the time, they would have known they were going to surrender, for one thing. So I don't think that was true.

Ken: It occurred to me because I had heard it.

Lam: There was a lot of speculation about it. There was speculation about it too because it was inconceivable in many people's minds that you could carry out anything like this and protect yourself from exposure.

Ken: During this period the Justice Department had carte blanche. It is not like how. They had oodles of money. Hoover hated the communists and you know he had complete support. Well, let's see - I think that about ends this tape. There are a few more questions on this period so -

Ken: Well, you have certainly answered this question, but I would like to have you go into it in a little more detail. Why did it take so long for you to come up from the underground, was it a groundswell of resentment? What happened toward the end?

Lam: I don't think you can call it a groundswell of resentment. There was a restlessness and a questioning which arose in many places. Among the people we worked with very closely, we were on very good personal terms; frankness with each other as far as feelings were concerned characterized our relationship. Actually a political judgment was involved. It took a long time to decide to carry out. This was one point on which the decisions or recommendations of the reserve leadership had to be discussed with the open leadership, to get their agreement, because this was a big step. That took some time. The consultations and agreements were always carried through the intermediate steps. There were no direct face to face meetings, or anything of that sort. Once the decision was made we very gradually disbanded the organization. I had to stick with it until this was accomplished.

Ken: Was the decision a joint one between the above-ground leadership and the underground leadership?

Lam: Yes, there had to be agreement of those in the national center.

Ken: How was it brought to you then? Of course you were part of the national leadership then.

Lam: The initiative came from our group because they were the ones involved, and if they were to surrender that meant they had to go to jail. A number of them had already been tried. They went out from this underground and went to prison. Then there were a number who were under indictment and had to stand trial under the Smith Act. That trial took place in 1956.

Ken: How did you feel about it when it finally happened?

Lam: It was a great relief. It's hard to say. We felt that an era was coming to an end. I couldn't see the future very clearly. It was difficult to see where we were going from there. I realized that I was in for a period of adjustment in coming back to California where the party leadership was in a

Lam: different sort of situation. Then, when I got back, which was in October, 1955, their case had not yet been reviewed by the Supreme Court. They were on a ppeal, so they didn't know whether they were to be going to prison or not. They had been convicted under the Smith Act and sentenced to five years in prison.

When I got back to California there was this possibility of those twelve having to go to prison at any time. If the Supreme Court did not agree to review their case, they would go to prison. So the California situation was very muddled up by that. There could have been a big change in California if all those people had to go to prison. And the reserve leadership in California was not really fully adequate to take on the leadership of the party in the state. So, when I came back, I walked into a hornet's nest actually where they were trying to make a lot of decisions in terms of what would happen to the party if they all had to go to jail. It was a very iffy situation.

Ken: Let's get away from politics for just a minute. How did you feel about coming back personally to your husband, to your friends, to your mother? What adjustments did you have to make?

Lam: The adjustments were very difficult. I was very happy to come back to California. I had been very homesick, at times really a chingly so. It was only the challenging nature of the work, and the fact that one couldn't relax at all. I had to keep going all the time. It was a very tedious kind of work because I had to be so aware of details, and it was such an abnormal kind of situation. So I was extremely happy to be home.

But my husband had an experience that was entirely different. Of course my mother did too. She never really understood what I was doing or how I was doing it, and I wasn't talking about it. I have never talked about it until now actually. One of the things we went home with was "now this whole chapter is closed. You are not going to go and talk about it. It is over." There was no discussion about what did you do, and all this stuff. It was just forgotten and put in the background. It was nobody's business, so nobody talked about. My mother never understood it and I never tried to explain it to her except to say that I was held in reserve so I wouldn't be arrested if the party were illegalized, and general things.

Rudie's understanding was, of course, somewhat different. Rudie had a great resentment because of the fact that we had been separated. He was very

Lam: resentful that we had been separated. He was very resentful of that, and felt that our personal status and our personal lives were ignored in this thing. He was correct about that. When I got back we had a hard time to take up where we had left off, which we couldn't do. We had been through experiences which were extremely difficult experiences. Rudie had gone to trial under the Smith Act case. He was in jail for six months waiting for the bail when they first got arrested.

Ken: This happened while you were still underground?

Lam: While I was underground. You see they were arrested in 1951, and their trial started on February 1st, 1952. They were arrested in July 1, I think, of 1951, and the next six months they were in jail in Los Angeles. There was a bail fight. They couldn't get bail. They had \$100,000. on each of them, and they were trying to fight that out. Then they had a trial which started February 1st, 1952, and went on for six or seven months.

Ken: How did you feel when you were stuck underground and all your friends and your husband -

Lam: I could only read about this in the newspapers. We never really knew what went on. When the trial was over and they were convicted and sentences they appealed, and this whole question of bail came up again while they were on appeal. They had another month of jail while they were fighting for bail, and again they had to fight the concept of \$100,000 on each of them. They finally won that, so that they were out on bail. The Supreme Court didn't act on this case=actually until June 17th, 1957.

During my first year at home, hanging over our heads was the possibility that any day the Supreme Court might deny the request for a review of their case, in which event they would have to go to jail.

The decision didn't come through until 1957. They actually went from the conviction, which took place in 1952, until the middle of 1957, before they knew

Lam: they would not have to go to jail. However, it was not a clear cut reversal. The Supreme Court, for legal reasons, remanded the case to the lower court giving the government the option to try the defendants again to correct the legal errors made by the prosecution, which the Supreme Court pointed up in its decision. I am not familiar with the details. The government decided not to try them again, which was a victory.

This all happened overlapping my period in the underground revealing the difference of experience that we had. Rudie had the experience of the courtroom, jail, and the endless waiting for a final decision on the five year sentence hanging over his head; while I had this peculiar experience which had an altogether different character, and in which there could also have been ultimate arrest and another Smith Act case. Fortunately it didn't happen. But this five year or six year period was, for both of us, a period of uncertainty. It was also a period during which we lived day by day because we couldn't work with perspective.

In the meantime I was in the position of being pressured into coming back into the California leadership, in a responsible position of leadership, because I had been in the reserve and I was was of the forces who would be drawn into leadership should they all go to jail.

Ken: I want to ask you one more question before we get into your party activities. You have read Belfrage's book, all the way through, and you have it here, because I want to quote from it. He, on page 38 of his book, The American Inquisition, says "The Communist Party applauded the use of the Smith Act by the Justice Department against Trotskyites." Did you read that part. What do you think of it?

Lam: I don't remember reading it.

Ken: You want to stop and look at the book?

Lam: Yes. My memory isn't that good.

Ken: I just wondered about it, because it must have happened.

Lam: It probably did.

Ken: There was one more question I wanted to ask about that period. Weren't there two men who went to Mexico and got arrested, that were Smith Act people?

Lam: I don't know whether it was one or two. I think it was only one - Gus Hall.

Ken: Did you have anything to do with that at all?

Lam: No. I don't know anything about it, and had no connection with it.

Ken: So you got back home and tried to get your life with Rudie together. Did you discuss this bitterness on his part with him?

Lam: Oh yes. We had a lot of discussions about it. Of course I could clarify the political reasons for it because he wasn't as aware of the thinking in the national center. You see, California was always a little different. In California we never had this feeling that we were at the eleventh hour before fascism. It turned out much later that this was so. The California leadership did not agree with this analysis. The Party in California had much more mass support as an organization. There was much more flexibility in the application of policy in California.

It could also be because we were not as close to the center as many other districts were. There was more independence here, and I think it many ways we didn't function like the party did in New York. I used to have the impression that they functioned in a way that made them appear to be underground. I mean the clubs didn't have much open activity. There was a lot of discussion about that. We had periods of growth in California when the rest of the party did not.

Rudie had been right out in the front with that trial and everything else, and the battle looked different from there. They were in the front line of discussing with the government representatives in a courtroom the party's position and the party's program, party perspectives. The theory and the practice of Marxism-Leninism was presented fully in the courtroom. That gives you a different feeling. Here everything is in the open.

It was very hard for him to visualize the necessity of what I had been in, and I agreed with him that there was no necessity. It helped to have these discussions. It helped me to see his viewpoint, what his vantage point was. And it helped me to come back to functioning as a normal open person as everybody else was. And I think the discussions made him see that it wasn't an open and shut thing like all black and white, you might say, as far as the actions of the national center was concerned in keeping this underground thing going for such a long period

Lam: of time, that there was a movement within it that saw its wrongness; that saw the fact that it should come to an end. It just took a long time to do it. It helped him to understand why it took so long.

It was also hard for me to take my place again in the leadership of the party. I was immediately considered part of the state leadership. I became a member of the state committee again normally as I had been before this underground assignment. I got a very good characterization and evaluation of my work by the people I had worked with.

Some things that happened in the state developed very rapidly. For instance, the independence of Los Angeles as a party organization from the state organization had almost reached a point where it became two districts, as it finally did. California became two districts because Los Angeles was, after all, the biggest part of the party, and it was like the tail wagging the dog. That's how they felt about it. It was very difficult to function as a state wide organization with this geographical distance between the two areas, and the political differences between the Northern and the Southern parts of the state. This is true in everything in California. I think it is true in other political parties in the state as well. The State Legislature is always faced with these questions, whether it is on water, or no matter what it is, there is always a difference in the problems between Northern and Southern California. The situation, as far as the party was concerned, was coming rapidly to the point where there were going to be two districts in California. This was a big contrast to what it had been before I left.

Ken: Pardon the interruption, but when you got out did you consider doing anything besides party work?

Lam: At that point, no. I was too uncertain as to what was going to happen. I think the uncertainty of whether Rudie was going to go to jail or not made a difference, and whether the leadership was going to go to jail or not. I was very much part of the leadership in its concern over what was going to happen to our organization. Whatever disillusionment there was, and there certainly was some, had not yet reached the point of my wanting to make a break. Much of what I am able to say now in criticism of the party, going back to the second World War and so on, I can say because with hindsight and in retrospect I am given certain insights which I didn't have at that time.

Ken: I interrupted earlier. You said you were being pressured to take a party job when you returned.

Ken: Let's go back to that now.

Lam: I don't know whether I gave any answer on that at all. Among the things being considered was just what role I should play in the event the guys went into jail, and there was a lot of discussion about that. No conclusions were drawn, and I was resisting certain proposals very strongly.

Ken: What certain proposals?

Lam: There was one proposal (this was the one I resisted most vigorously) that I become the district organizer, and I didn't want to do that. As I said, there was never any conclusion drawn. After all, several people had been put into the reserve here in California with the express idea that if the leadership had to go to prison these would be the guys who would take over the leadership. In other words they would become district organizer, county organizer in Los Angeles, which was considered more important than San Francisco. As a matter of fact, I think they did merge the San Francisco county committee and the state operation for a while when Oleta functioned as state organizational secretary (in Northern California) with Bill Schneiderman. At that time they did away with the San Francisco county committee because it seemed like a duplication of leadership as the activities did become much more limited than previously.

Ken: What job did you finally take then?

Lam: I don't remember. You see I went to work. I don't remember that I had any specific responsibility while we were waiting for the Supreme Court decision. When I first started I worked as a temporary secretary, just took temporary jobs out of Western Girls, out of their top division because I was fast enough in my secretarial work. I had all kinds of interesting small jobs which included several weeks with the State Department. Anyway that went on for almost a year. And then I went to work for the legal firm over in Oakland when Aubrey Grossman was with Edises, Treuhaft and Grogan. One of their secretaries was pregnant so they asked me to come in temporarily and work for them a couple of months. Then another one got pregnant. So it ended up my working there almost eight months. I had to commute to Oakland. During that period I was taking a course in medical secretarial work at the Marina Adult High School because I decided I was going to go into that field.

Just prior to the period of my working in the secretarial jobs and the eight months with the

Lam: legal firm in Oakland, there was a national convention in 1957, and national committee meetings of some importance. My working out in jobs like this started in 1957, so I wasn't in full time work between that time and my resignation from the party in 1958.

Ken: Did you take state responsibilities?

Lam: Yes. I was on the state committee and functioned with the state committee and I think with the state board, but I am not quite sure that I did that for a very long period. I went to work. I don't know how the thing was solved in the state office. I don't have any remembrance of that. I think I did become organizational secretary again for short period of time after my return from the underground.

Ken: But not full time?

Lam: Yes. It was full time, but it was a short period. I don't remember the sequence of events. It is possible that Loretta would remember.

Ken: Did you miss your friends that you lived with all this time?

Lam: Yes, I did. We became awfully close friends.

Ken: You left for a while and got an apartment by yourself. Was that toward the end?

Lam: About half way through the whole thing.

Ken: You lived alone for three years?

Lam: Not that long. I lived alone in New York I think for about a year and a half. Then I lived with another couple for a while in another city, and I constantly had contact with this first couple who developed into very important people in our group. Then, after the thing was all over, some years later they moved out to Los Angeles. So I have contact with them, and I see them. We have great affection between us. It is a friendship that has lasted. I have very close friendships with a number of people who are not in this area, who are in the Midwest or in New York, but whom I have seen on occasion when they come out here.

Ken: I wanted to ask you another thing. Rudie was full time in the party when you weren't then? Did that have any effect on your life?

Lam: Let me see. Rudie was not always full time. He worked out of the Culinary Union. You remember the dishwashers?

Lam: I think that overlapped the period when I wasn't working for the party too. I just can't quite recall. We didn't have any problems about that in any event. The question whether we were doing full time work or not did not create problems. We were on a very equal footing in terms of our functioning.

Ken: And he lived with your mother all this time?

Lam: Yes. He stayed right where we had lived all this time. My mother's relationship with him became very close during that time. She made several trips down to Los Angeles during the trial. While he was in jail she went to see him, and she attended the trial for periods of time. He used to come back to San Francisco on week ends, and would spend time with her and with other friends up here. She was very supportive and he was, of course, extremely appreciative. It was really quite a remarkable relationship that developed between them.

Ken: Shortly after this period you left the communist party?

Lam: Yes, I did. Following the Khrushchev revelations about Stalin and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, which took place in 1956, there was a general exodus from the party. Three fourths of the membership left during that period, which kind of overlapped the period of adjustment and the period of efforts to get the party democratized. The fact that so large a section of the membership left the party at that time, individually or in groups, or whatever way they left, came with a revulsion against the revelations that Khrushchev's report brought out; and the Soviet army moving into Hungary, which was an inconceivable thing, (you know, that the Red Army should move into a country that is supposedly a socialist country) this showed that there was disillusionment with the Soviet Union as well as with the party and the communist leadership which had always been considered as working toward an ideal system of society.

The realization that the communist party of the United States was isolated from the American people, that it was a sectarian organization, that it had become very dogmatic, added to the frustrations the membership felt and the doubts and grievances which they had and which finally erupted in this period. I mean it sort of opened the gates to all of the accumulated frustrations of many of the members and leading people, particularly those who were searching for some way of making the party a more relevant organization in American political life. In fact you could say that the party had become totally irrelevant in the political life of the country at that point. In February 1957 we had

Lam: the 16th national convention of the party, and that took place after these revelations - the Khrushchev period and Hungary. The convention reacted in a certain way to these revelations and to the realization that the party needed to do something to save itself and to become an organization with roots in American political life, a democratic organization which could be accepted by the people.

The convention adopted a great many changes which were intended to bring about a more realistic program with an effort to adapt the Marxist-Leninist principles to American reality, learning from what had happened in the Soviet Union and what had happened in Hungary and so on, drawing certain conclusions from that, particularly the bureaucracy, the cult of the individual, and all of these things which were revealed with such searchlight clarity by Khrushchev's report (though the Soviet Union may some day modify what it said about Stalin, which is still a question). Nevertheless, Khrushchev's report threw a great light on what was happening under socialism in the Soviet Union, the inequities, and so on, which time has shown were not at all distorted. Any independent review of what is going on in the Soviet Union now brings forward the results of some of these things to the Soviet people.

Ken: Pardon me, did you go to this convention?

Lam: Yes I was a delegate to this convention.

Ken: What part did you play?

Lam: I was on a committee which had to review how democratic centralism was applied in the American party. This committee (I think I was either the chairman of the secretary of it) was concerned particularly with the question of overcoming bureaucratic practices of work within the organization. We were trying to re-evaluate the principle of democratic centralism and its application in the American party. We came out with a resolution on this. There were other committees on other aspects of party work. Every aspect of party work was reviewed by this convention.

The program adopted did bring some changes. However, during the first national committee meetings which took place after that, the counter movement against the decisions of the 16th national convention began. A real struggle began to take place within the national center between 1956 and 1958 which we resigned from the party. I read recently in Peggy Dennis's letter of resignation from the party

Lam: that the struggle for these changes continued until 1960 at another convention, but did not succeed. This struggle was to no avail at all. The attempt to get these changes effected within the organizational structure, functioning and programmatic approach of the American party against sectarianism and dogmatism. We finally realized (the people who signed our statement of resignation) that it was impossible to effect changes within the communist party with the existing leadership and policies despite this vigorous internal struggle which extended over another period of years. It was bordering on a factional struggle. So we decided at that point to leave the party, and to leave it as a group.

We were all part of the leadership, that corps of leadership which had been in the party for thirty years, who grew into party leadership from the Young Communist League. We were part of that corps, and logically to be considered as the successors of the older generation of the national leadership of the party.

It was quite a blow when twenty-one people who were generally of this calibre all got out at the same time. Our decision to do it that way was not because we wanted to destroy anything in a head-on way, but because we wanted to dramatize the degree of criticism we had, to dramatize the fact that there were people in the party leadership who understood that the party had become an irrelevant organization, and that something very basic had to happen in the party if it was to be an organization effective in American political life.

Ken: You mentioned before why you didn't stay in and fight for this?

Lam: Our main feeling was that if we remained in we would be embroiled in a useless factional struggle, and we felt it was useless because the bulk of the national leadership stood on the other side. They were continuing in the old way. After this exodus from the party and some reshuffling of leadership, well what happened? Gus Hall was still there, and he is again running for president this year, and the party is even less relevant than it was before.

A very dramatic underscoring of this is Peggy Dennis's resignation from the party after fifty years of membership!

Ken: You signed this letter of resignation along with other leading people, but your husband, who was also a leading person, did not sign?

Lam: No, he did not. He left the party at that time. He declined to sign the statement without much explanation. I couldn't really understand why he didn't want to sign. I think there may have been a subjective factor where he didn't want to be in the position of publicly following my leadership. He didn't want it thought that I compelled him to do so. Of course I made no effort to. It was up to him to do as he saw best. He agreed with our criticism, and dropped out of the party. But at that point he didn't want to sign the letter of resignation. No one in the group, when we had our meeting, pressured him. Some of the signatures are only first names for various reasons.

Ken: We will include this statement, of course, in your files.

Lam: The statement makes reference to the convention which I have described, this 16th national convention, and in the fact that there was disagreement on the part of the national committee to the decisions of that convention. We go on to explain that our reasons for leaving the party are not only because they disagreed with us on that score, but because of our feeling that irreparable damage had been done to the party already; that it was so isolated that only if the whole party worked in one direction could it ever get out of that position of isolation.

Ken: Before we finish this part of the tape, the reasons you went into the party you have already given, and now the reasons you went out. But do you still believe in socialism as being the right thing?

Lam: I still feel that some kind of socialism is desirable. I don't think we have a model for what can happen in the United States in any sense. Those countries that have had revolutions and have set up socialist systems have so many problems that are still unresolved and very serious. There are great varieties showing up in these countries, as between the Soviet Union and China, for instance. Or between the Soviet Union and

Lam: the satellite socialism countries which had socialism sort of foisted upon them. I mean they didn't have revolutions. They became socialist countries under the leadership of the Soviet Union as a result of the outcome of World War II. Then there is Cuba, of course, and the examples of revolutionary changes in Portugal and Chile. And each one is different. Now you see what the communist party of Italy has accomplished with their tremendous popularity, their growth and their vote in the recent election - the position they are taking in regard to their role in the Italian government, and so on. There are communist mayors in many Italian cities. What is emerging on an international scale is more independence of each national communist movement or movement for socialism, whether it is under the communist party or some other party organization, as it was in Chile.

I think envisioning of socialism in the United States is a very difficult thing to pin down at this point. We need a change in the economic and political system towards something like the concept of socialism. The inequalities of life, the polarization between the big industrial complexes and the mass of the people, the working class primarily, but the whole of the population, is greater and greater with the military-industrial complex within the country and the multi-national corporations internationally. The role that American imperialism plays is very great. This has not changed. Much of the analysis that can be made under the guidance of Marxism is to my mind still valid. But I cannot categorically say what I think should happen in the United States. I don't see anything in the political picture that would encourage the idea that there is any movement for socialism in the United States except fragmented little groups that exist everywhere throughout the country.

It is encouraging to see that there is recognition of Eugene Debs, for instance, by the government. They are putting out a postage stamp in observance of the hundredth birthday of Eugene Debs, which took place recently, revealing recognition of the fact that there are American roots in the socialist concept. But I cannot envision how socialism can come about in the United States. I still believe that it is necessary

Lam: to have basic political and economic changes in the system to bring about some improvement in the status of all humanity.

Ken: You still consider yourself a Marxist then?

Lam: To a degree I think I could say that. Many of the teachings of Marx have to be eliminated because history has shown them to be out of date or out of place. I think, however, that Marx's discovery of how profits are created by labor of the working class is true. The philosophy that Marx and Engels developed, dialectical materialism, stands up to the times. Although I am not politically active in anything, and I haven't been for all these years, I am still interested in politics and I keep track of what goes on. I am very interested in what is happening internationally and what other communist parties are doing, and how they are approaching the solution of these problems within their own countries. It is obvious to me that the movements for socialism are going to be different in every country. It is also obvious that a peaceful transition to socialism is the general aim. If the transition is not peaceful the violence will come as a result of the reaction of the ruling class which is being replaced. If it is to be a peaceful transition, it can only come by great coalitions on certain issues developing, and a transition that will come very naturally - the gradual nationalization of the industries and things of this kind. This is speculative, and I don't think one should speculate.

Our concepts of socialism much of the time we were in the party were almost Utopian. We wanted socialism like some big rainbow in the future, and it was almost like a utopian dream because it had no reality. The history of our country in the whole of the twentieth century, and the history of our party within that, shows that this was a utopian concept. That is the only way I can characterize it.

Ken: I guess so, but in the process of having this concept you did a lot of work. Do you think you did a lot of good?

Lam: Yes. Well, some good. I think that many of the reforms in our country came as a result of this.

Ken: I'll tell you what. We can finish this in one more tape. But as long as we are here now, and this question flows from this, this is sort of a really loaded question. But what do you think you have accomplished in life? I think what you accomplished as a result of your party activity is part of what you accomplished in life. Have you thought about it at all?

Lam: I have given thought to it quite often. I think it is very hard to pin down. I've survived. I feel like a survivor of many battles, political and personal, which, under the kind of problems that presented themselves to all the people of our country and of the whole world in this century, is almost like the victory of the survivors of concentration camps. When I think back over the whole period (and your question came up in my mind very often during this whole period of our interviews, because this forced me to review the whole of my activities) it is sometimes very painful. I still feel that if I can put myself mentally back into the situation as it actually was when I started in the early thirties on this career of full time work in the communist movement that I would do it over again.

There are many points (I can see them now) where I could have made a break. And I ask myself, why didn't I? You asked me, why didn't you? I can only say there was always a tug of war between my conscience, my convictions, the desire to do something else, and the lack of an alternative that had meaning or substance. I didn't have an alternative immediately that seemed as possible of making a contribution to society as what I was in. In retrospect that was probably wrong thinking because if I had made a break, let's say, at one of these critical points where some disillusionment set in, even if it wasn't all encompassing, and hadn't meant a break with the party but meant a break with full time work, I might have taken up another area of activity. I might have been able to do something else with my life. I believe that I had the capacity to do something else. I don't know just what. Maybe in a scientific field, the medical field, or something like that. I would have had to work for the education necessary to be in any one of those fields which are interesting to me. But I think the lack of any clearly formed alternative to the work I was doing in the face of my overwhelming sense of "you can't walk out" - I had a conscience about it, which prevented me from doing so - the thing I mentioned once before in one of the interviews about our relationship to the party being almost of a religious character.

Ken: Actually the party did accomplish quite a lot in the course of your membership in it?

Lam: I think in the sum total you would have to say that, and I think historically that will come out once there is an objective review of the whole period before the party went into a decline.

Ken: What were the key things you would say the party had accomplished in the course of your membership in it?

Lam: I think certainly in the thirties and forties it influenced the adoption of many reform like unemployment insurance, social security, the growth of the labor movement, the emergence of the CIO, the industrial organization in the labor movement. These were substantive contributions that were made by the party or individual party members in some situations.

The party played a positive role in supporting the war once the war became clearly an anti-fascist anti-Hitler war, and in fighting for the second front against Hitler.

The party also functioned well in many coalition movements that developed around some of the most repressive aspects of the cold war and of the McCarthy period. Some of the coalition movements which went on independent of the party during the period of McCarthyism had their birth in the immediate post war period of the cold war in the Wallace movement, and even prior to that in the time of the war when coalition against war and fascism was one of the areas which we had worked in from the time of the Spanish war when the danger of world war developed. We had certain contacts then among intellectual groupings, in other political movements, in some of the independent organizations which developed in that time, and in some sections of the labor movement. Carry overs of these coalitions expressed themselves in the anti McCarthy struggle in the Rosenberg case, in some of these developments that took place. Those were positive things.

I don't think we can hold the party responsible for the impact of the virulence of the anti communist hysteria which developed in the period of the cold war which was one of the main factors which made the party ineffective - the major factor which made the party ineffective. Anti-communism made it difficult for the party to carry on its activity. The party made it worse by pursuing a policy of isolation and sectarianism, and because it developed such dogmatic positions such as "we are going to have fascism" and that sort of thing.

Ken: I see. Well that does it except for a few questions at the end about what you think of young people today, and so forth.

Ken: There are a few final questions, Louise, and they are sort of broad and general. What do you think of your experiences when you were young and what the youth of today are going through?

Lam: There are similarities and great differences. The similarities might be expressed in the fact that there is unemployment, and inflation, and this kind of issue - although not to the degree that it was in the early thirties. The big change in the whole world situation is that which was brought about by the conclusion of World War II with the use of the atomic bomb and the fact that all the generations since (I mean those who were born after that period) have this threat of thermo-nuclear warfare over their heads. This has a great impact on the young people, and has had for the last decade or so. It is one of the contributing factors to many of the movements in the universities, of the anti war movement against the war in Vietnam, of the changes in the way of life of thousands and thousands of young people, of the search for new values in life. The present period is, in many respects, far more serious and far more difficult to focus collective and united action on the issues facing the young generation. This is seen further in the fact that there is no countermovement of substance. Whatever left organizations there are remain fragmented and disunited. Workingclass consciousness in the sense we had it or experienced it in the thirties does not exist to the same degree at all. This is probably because there have been, since World War II, many changes in the status of the American working class - with what you might call a certain amount of bribery of the working class by relative affluence on the establishment to keep labor quiescent on the issues.

Ken: If some kids who were in a radical or left wing group came to you and asked for advice, what kind of advice would you give them?

Lam: I couldn't say.

Ken: Or any young people. They wouldn't have to be radical.

Lam: It's hard to say because you can't advise them to join any movement. There isn't one. There isn't one that has either the strength, the ideology, the program, or the

Lam: capacity of leadership. The only thing you could tell them is they would have to search and search and keep on searching for avenues of activity on the individual issues, on specific issues, using the forms that exist. I think even an example like Tom Hayden is valuable. With his background he uses the channels of the democratic party to get across some programmatic questions which could help change the situation. I can't see that there is, at this period, any direction, any coalescing even, of a movement that could bring together the dissatisfied young people. Their only chance is this continued search and to keep their minds open to any new ideas, examine them, and we can only hope that ultimately something will develop in this country as it has in other countries.

Ken: These are general questions, so they are rather scattered. I was going to ask you about the role of women in the suffrage fight as compared to the role of women today, and that would go into your opinion of women's liberation. Do you want to generalize on this?

Lam: I think the most important thing one can say about the suffrage movement is that it was a very protracted and very militant struggle, mainly by middle class women, which ultimately achieved success. Their tenacity and great militancy was admirable though it took a long time to achieve women's suffrage. Unfortunately, as soon as the right to vote was won, this movement disappeared and didn't go on to the next stage of struggle. Now it has taken all these years for women's consciousness to come into some kind of organization form for completing the fight for women's freedom. And it has not yet been achieved. I think this is the limitation of the suffrage movement though their contribution was enormous, truly enormous. The dire effects that were predicted with the right of women to vote never developed. Actually women sort of settled into being voters much the same way as men did. I mean they go along with the trends, or they follow the trends that their husbands set for them. So the right to vote did not have a liberating effect. Nor has it had the revolutionary effect which was predicted by many people at the time.

Ken: Then, what is your opinion of women's liberation today. I think you have done quite a lot of thinking on it.

Lam: I have, and I am very much for the goals of the women's liberation movement, with a few reservations.

Lam: I believe that the equal rights amendment is a necessary amendment; that if it passes it will help. There would be an educational impact, and it can't help but improve to some measure the situation of women. But there are some slogans and some approaches within the women's liberation movement which, the only way I can describe them, are discomfoting. One is the slick magazines that some segments of the women's liberation movement have gone into producing. They are largely over the heads of the majority of women anyway, and don't seem to go in the direction of achieving what is desired.

There is evidence that the reaction to male chauvinism and male supremacy has shown some groping in the women's liberation movement in directions which are not going to be fruitful. Now it is a new movement and every new movement has its so-called embryonic stages, and there are sometimes errors made in directions where they go to extremes, resulting in the spread of all these sexual hang ups - of going into bi-sexual activity and lesbian activities on a wide scale as a substitute for normal man-women relationships. This basically will not solve the problem of equality for women. And I see this as a reaction against male supremacy. It is the other side of the coin, you might say. Such approaches result too in things that are very superficial. For example, the question of whether you wear a bra or not, which will also not bring about equality.

I think the most important question is that this movement so far has not succeeded in focusing the attention on what appears to me to be the most vital problem of all - the economic independence of women. Without economic independence there is no liberty for anyone. Women need to have the possibility of becoming economically independent. Unfortunately the women's movement today is also made up of largely middle class women. Working class women are not attracted to this movement in any way, and they desperately need to win these economic demands. They are not getting the leadership from the trade unions either, including the women in the trade unions. They are not focusing their attention on this question. And women are still getting paid less than men despite all the noise. This is true for a vast majority of women. The women's liberation movement just touches a minority. Even though the movement has gotten a lot of publicity it has not succeeded in tackling the basic question. I think this is the basic question.

Lam: And it is necessary to reorder the priorities of the women's movement so that they can tackle the economic issues first. Then women need to be considered as equals in the whole world, and to have a place as equals wherever they may be. If you think of this at all, you realize that this has not been achieved except to a very small measure, and largely by women who have focused their attention on their own individual development and creative abilities and become independent and liberated themselves as individuals, but not as part of a movement.

Also this is not the whole answer to the problems that face women because men in America have a lot of problems too as a result of the same general situation. Some problems can only be solved by women and men working together for a solution. Even the problem of equal pay for equal work. To achieve this the men have to be involved and have to help because the status of the whole working population is involved. So I would say that women are not yet free; that women today are part of a great historical transition; that we are the forerunners of the free women of the future. That is as far as we can go in evaluating this at this point.

Ken: You raised this question in the last interview, or the interview before that, about women using abortions as a method of birth control. What do you think about the lesser restrictions now on abortion laws?

Lam: I am very much in favor of them. I think the abuses are there, naturally. But I think there is much less danger to women who are not trying to get illegal abortions. There is much less danger. They have a greater freedom of deciding for themselves on the basis of economic problems, personal problems, or health problems, whatever they may be, mental health and so on. The abuses will have to be somehow dealt with. There are abuses. When you read the statistics of how many abortions are taking place, they are startling. Nevertheless, if you compare them to the number of abortions which took place when they were not legal, and the many resulting deaths, they are lower and less grim. So, in the total picture, I am in favor of how abortions are now handled, legalizing and permitting them under expert medical supervision.

Ken: On the matter of women's liberation, you discussed working class women. What about third world women?

Lam: I think they would definitely be included, even more so, in a sense, because especially in the United states the black women, the Chicano women and other ethnic groups suffer greatly from inequality. You can almost say everything double for them on what has been said. The women's liberation movement, as it is today, is not really attracting the black women at all except a tiny minority. Nor is it making extraordinary efforts to do so, and I think for many of the same reasons as listed above.

There is one problem about the question of abortions and black women. Many black people are opposed to legalized abortion because they, especially people who are on welfare, regard it as a means of what they call genocide of the black race, because many times it is recommended particularly to black women on welfare that they do have abortions since their families have grown so fast. The same applies to the use of birth control. They regard both these things as efforts to stop the growth and development of the black people. I have heard black women express these views.

Ken: Here is another question. Other women interviewers ask it, so there must be a reason for it. What would you say the happiest time of your life was?

Lam: It is hard to say. I think my childhood.

Ken: Why?

Lam: Well, I had a good childhood and a good home life. It was a period of growth. I see it like that. The first World War was a great shock because I was just arriving at my teens during that period. But I think my childhood would have to be designated as the happiest time because my entire adult life was just filled with struggle, with hard work and problems. Though I realize that problems, struggle, tragedy, and so on are a part of life. That is life, and you are a part of life, doing and working, and you can't evade that. But I did have periods in my life where I had substantial happiness.

Ken: What about the most fulfilling experience, either socially, politically, or personally?

Lam: I think there have been a number of satisfactory periods - while I was in the movement, which was so big a part of my life. I would say that in the period of the thirties there was great stimulation in what we were doing. If there were any achievements - well the recruiting

Lam: I did into the party gave me a great satisfaction. Later there were periods during the forties, during the war, when we finally felt the war was getting over the hump, we were winning the war over Hitlerism, that was satisfaction in a general way - not really so personal. I had always gotten a great deal of pleasure out of my life in the outdoors, our various vacations. Those were happy periods, and I had a lot of them over the years.

Ken: In reverse, then, can you tell me what the most miserable time of your life was?

Lam: Actually the most miserable time has been in the last ten years, and that goes beyond this interview - beyond the period we have been discussing. Something to do with aging, I think, and in my family there were lots of things that happened which brought about great difficulties. My father's death and mother's death took place within two years of each other. Oleta, who was my best friend, died just two weeks after my mother did. My niece was killed in an accident. My grandniece too. And my husband has been hospitalized for almost six years (he has been ill for almost fifteen years). And my sister was recently permanently hospitalized. So the personal aspects of my life have taken on a sombre appearance. The last ten years have been most difficult.

The period in the underground was very mixed. There were many things I enjoyed, and I found happiness in new friendships during that period. I felt I was learning and growing in areas beyond the movement itself. But the lopsideness of that experience as a whole, of being alone in a situation, was not very gratifying.

Ken: Now that you have retired from work, what are your varied interests. How do you keep happy?

Lam: That's an important question. The way you place it is very good, because I think "happiness" at this point in my life depends on having something to be interested in - depends on doing something because I am no longer working at a regular job. I spent almost eighteen years as a medical secretary after I left the party. I worked for a period of time in legal secretarial work, and then took a course in medical terminology, anatomy, pathology, and so forth. Of all my secretarial work, the eighteen years in doctor's offices were a good experience. I learned a great deal in the course of that work. I retired when I got to be seventy years old.

Lam: Then I had to decide in which direction my activities and interests should go. I have always been very interested in natural sciences. So I joined the California Academy of Science in Golden Gate Park and took a six month course in vertebrate biology to prepare myself to function as a volunteer docent. I have been doing that since April. It gives me a lot of pleasure. Now I have been offered a job at the Academy in one of the museum shops, and I will be working three days a week starting some time in September doing that, which may be a stepping stone to other things in the Academy. At least I hope so.

The Academy has courses every few years, depending on their needs. The Academy has several hundred docents to work with, but every now and then they have to refresh that group because they have casualties. Courses on the aquarium, earth sciences, are contemplated in the future. So that these are perspectives for me if I should so decide

Then of course I do a lot of reading. I have a camera, a music system, and a telescope. I fiddle around with astronomy. And I am still trying to get outdoors occasionally, health permitting. I am a member of the Sierra Club. Two of my heroes are John Muir and Jacques Costeau, supreme conservationists.

Ken: I see. This is the last question on your personal interview, and I just want to know for my own benefit, and for the benefit of other people, how did you feel when I first asked you if you would consider being interviewed, and how did you feel during the whole interview process, because you mentioned it a couple of times.

Lam: At first I thought, oh no. I couldn't be involved. I thought, first of all, it is not interesting to anybody and it sounded like too much. You wrote me several letters, and I think some of the things that you mentioned in your letters made me think about it a little more deeply. One of the things was the point you made of the value of a history like this in the future - not from the immediate point of view, but its value say in twenty, thirty, fifty years when there will be more history of this period written and where it can serve a small purpose. I discussed it with a few people, with Loretta (who I think it also a candidate), and with several others. There was a mixed reaction. One the whole I think there was a good deal of encouragement given to me to go on with it, so that it why I finally

Lam: I think your role was very good, Lucy, because you have a very intelligent approach to the kind of questions you ask. I don't know if the familiarity with the movement has something to do with this, but it was a good experience. We ran into difficulties at one point which I told you about at the time.

Ken: Tell me again.

Lam: The difficulties which arose when I got to the forties after the period of the thirties which I found somewhat easy to do - easier to cope with. But in that war era, which had so many things happening, there were so many avenues that had been re examined by me and re evaluated - in the process of which I was re evaluating my experience in the party. At that point I came to the conclusion that I couldn't do everything - that I had to pick out the major things and deal with them - particularly those things which led to my disillusionment with the party and my ultimate resignation, which took a long period.

People reading this history will wonder "why didn't she get out earlier?" - which even I thought to myself as we were going along. I was concerned over the approach which I also gave a lot of thought to. The first time you came I didn't really expect to start right then, and hadn't given much thought to the whole thing. But we got along all right on it. Then the thought I gave to the whole question was how can I approach my work and my life in this movement in which I was so completely wound up, so integrated, and where my work was a reflection of what was happening politically and what the organization was doing politically. I couldn't see handling my life separate and apart from examining the historical developments and what they meant for the party and how the party reacted, and within that, what my participation was - my role, and my reaction. This may have prolonged the interviews considerably, and probably did. I have no way of comparing it to anyone else or any other experiences. There were times when I found it extremely painful to review what was going on precisely because the re-evaluation and the review focused attention on the errors of the organization, on the almost religious approach we had toward it. This was painful because it showed that

Lam: there was not as independent a resolution of one's problems as it appeared at the time. In other words, my action was within the framework of a dogma and not something that I concluded for myself by taking everything into consideration. We did not take everything into consideration. We took into consideration only the needs, the aims and objectives of the organization which had in time become so completely dogmatic, so completely sectarian in character.

There were times when I got very tired. I could tell there wasn't the same flow of thinking and easy flow of reaction. I prepared myself every time because I didn't want to get wandering off on to some subject that didn't apply directly to what we were trying to achieve.

In sum total, however, it has been a very fascinating experience.

ON ANITA WHITNEY

Q. These are actually just some questions about her as a person. If you don't remember, just say so. I've gone through this whole book Al Richmond wrote, called Native Daughter, written in honor of her 77th birthday, and he wrote it for the Communist Party in honor of Anita Whitney. There were some things about her personal life I didn't get from the book. You can probably fill in on it.

Q. When did you first meet Anita Whitney?

A. When I joined the party.

Q. How.

A. She was in the party. First I heard her speak. I didn't get to know her personally until I was in for a little bit. She would come to the headquarters. I was working in the office as secretary at the beginning in the early thirties.

Q. What were your first impressions of her?

A. I admired her endlessly because she was a very dignified woman and obviously a very devoted one and a ~~very~~ intelligent one. She was extremely active in all aspects of the party's work. She was one of our foremost speakers, and was ~~extremely~~ well known. Her role in the suffragette movement was known in California, and she was known in the whole left progressive movement. She had an uncle, ~~I guess~~, who was a ~~Supreme Court~~ Justice of the United States Supreme Court so her family background was also one that made her known in California.

Q. What did she look like?

A. She was dignified. At first that is the main word I can think of. She was tall and slender and she talked a little bit like Eleanor Roosevelt. I think that her education had something to do with this. I don't know where she was educated. She was very ladylike. She had ^{the} ~~this~~ same sort of ~~very~~ ladylike quality Eleanor Roosevelt had. If you heard either one of them speak it would remind you of the other. That was my experience.

She lived with a nephew. He was very devoted to her, ~~He was very devoted to her~~ although he had absolutely no ^{sympathy} ~~agreement~~ with her political views, ~~at all~~. The only thing you could say was that he tolerated them. But he never showed this in any way in his relationship to her. I met him quite a few times in her home and he was just as gentle and considerate

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of her and helped her out when she needed transportation *and in many other ways.* He would bring her to the meetings she had to go to and pick her up again. He never argued with her about these things and she never tried to persuade him of her views or ideology at all. She just said, "My nephew is not interested. He is A political" and that was the way it was. I think the fact that he lived with her gave her something of a family aspect in her living situation because she ^{had} never married and was financially quite independent with I guess an inheritance or whatever it was. She didn't have to work or anything of that nature so she threw herself completely into activity for the organization.

Q. Do you know why he lived with her?

A. No. He was also unmarried, and I think he was devoted to her from childhood. It was one of those long relationships. It was not a matter of a decision by anybody as I understood it. It was just that he was so devoted to her, and she loved him very dearly.

Q. She must have presented problems for him.

A. Yes. I think so. He ultimately did marry, but he was then in middle age.

Q. After you met her did you ever discuss with her her past activities?

A. Once or twice she told us a lot about it informally and in very general terms. I don't remember what she told us ^{specifically,} But she got some of the young women together and talked to us when I was still connected with the youth movement.

Q. I understand she was a prohibitionist.

A. She was that. It is true.

Q. Did she discuss that with you?

A. No. It was known that she was; that she was not in favor of drinking; but she never imposed her views on that question on anyone else that I know of. It was never discussed ~~too much.~~

Q. Did she ever tell you why she never got married?

A. No she didn't. And nobody asked her, even Al Richmond. She was afraid that he was going to. She confessed that to Rudie. ~~Said~~ ^{she} said, "Now he's gotten everything out of me except one thing and I know that he is going to ask me the next time he comes." Well, he never did. He must have just felt that

this was probing into an area that she may not want to talk about. She never told anyone.

Rudie was very close to her because Rudie and she constituted for a long period, well over a decade, the core of the party's money raising committee, the finance committee. They went all over the state to see people who were making regular contributions to the party who were not party members. They used to visit these people together. Rudie drove her around a lot during that period. He also took her to meetings where she had to speak, if it was out of town. So they had a very heart warming relationship. There was great mutual respect there. It never got to the intimate side of her life. Their discussions never got into that area at all. Rudie respected that too. He felt that if she wanted to talk to him about it she would. He was open to it. But she never did. I thought it was a delightful relationship. Rudie was very gentle with her. He had a great love for her. It was almost like she was some relative of his. He had that kind of feeling for her.

Q. Did you know anything about her other friends? Did she have men friends?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. Not in a sexual way.

A. Not that I know of. I think her friendships were so centered around the party and the movement. She was very active in her club, her party club and the ^{section} ~~second~~ she was in too, ^{in addition to her state-wide activities} ~~it wasn't on a state or a county level~~. She participated in many things. She kept herself very busy. She had some lady friends who would come for tea and that kind of thing.

Q. Who?

A. I don't know who they were. There was one who lived in San Jose, a writer who had been in the Soviet Union. Her name was - her last name was Porter. I can't think of her first name. She was a close friend of Anita's. She was very similar to Anita. She had also come from the suffragette movement and gone left with her sister. ^{an} ~~And they had this old house, this~~ old mansion in San Jose. ^{she came from} ~~it was~~ an old and wealthy family. ^{an} ~~They~~ had a little rivalry going, you know. They used to have little critical sessions with each other. Anita was sort of critical of her. But I can't ~~remember~~ her first name.

Q. Well we can look it up. I think it's in the book at a matter

of fact. The book mentioned Ella Reeve Bloor and Mrs. Warwick who were two good friends of hers.

A. Mrs. Warwick was a very old woman. She has been dead for many years. She was also a member of the party. If I recall correctly she also had a similar background to Anita's from the suffragette movement. She was not among the middle class people. She was more plebian or whatever you want to call it.

Q. Then did she actually keep contact with all her old friends?

A. Yes, with a number of them. Especially those who had ideologically come along, even though they were not members of the party. Mrs. Warwick was a member. She did keep contact with many of them who became friendly toward the Soviet Union or who had some feeling of adherence to the left progressive movement.

Q. I knew her somewhat too. I found she wasn't too easy to know.

A. She had a reserve. That's true. She was a reserved person. I don't know whether this got more so as she got older. I have the impression that it did because the demands on a person become pretty great, and there is the question of maintaining some serenity and maintaining some composure under the pressures of the movement which got very heavy at times. I think she developed this reserve more or less as a protective thing in order not to get too involved with things which were not the main things which she had to do.. This reserve showed itself mainly with people with whom she had not had a long intimate working relationship with. There was no such feeling on either my part or Rudie's I know. I don't know about the other people in the leadership. I know that Oleta was close to her. Oleta had a certain reserve too. She was hard to get to know. She and Anita got along extremely well. Bill did too. Bill is another one of these people that you can't always tell what he is thinking.

Q. Did she have any interests outside of the party - any cultural interests?

A. Not that I know of. I don't recall ever having heard her speak of the theatre or movies or anything like that, or music.

Q. Or even reading?

A. She did quite a lot of reading. I should say that she had

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a special friendship with Beatrice Kinkead too. I think they were closer in age than was true of many of the other women. I think Beatrice stimulated her reading as she stimulated everybody she got in contact with. Anita did a lot of reading. She did a lot of the reading that was necessary for her speechmaking.

Q. Would you say she was a student of Marxism-Leninism?

A. No. I don't think you could say that.

Q. Did she ever tell you why she became a communist?

A. No. I never had such a conversation with her.

Q. What did you talk to her about?

A. Usually it was whatever was going on - the current problems. We went to a number of conventions together. We were both delegates to party conventions, both of us and Oleta. Once we shared a suite of rooms in a hotel in New York, Anita, Oleta and I. And she was the first one up in the morning, all dressed and everything when we were just sort of coming to. She was selfless in a way, very modest in her demands, very considerate of other people. When we were at conventions the convention took her attention totally. I mean Oleta and I went off at one convention to a dog show at Madison Square Garden. She was interested in these Lhasa Apso dogs, so we took off and went to the dog show which amazed everybody. Anita wouldn't do anything like that. She was there and she stuck to her duties. She was a marvelous traveller because we had to travel by train. Most of the delegates sat up, but the party insisted on her having a berth because of her age. She always felt a little guilty about that. She never had any complaints about the hardships of traveling. It was during World War II, and it really was difficult to travel between New York and San Francisco because of the troop movements, and the trains would be loaded with soldiers and sailors, so the travel conditions were very unpleasant, very, very crowded. She never had any complaints about that. She very stoically went ahead with what had to be done.

Q. Was she a good speaker?

A. She was not a dynamic speaker at all in the sense of stirring people's emotions. Her ladylike quality came through and she was persuasive. Her speeches were always extremely well

constructed and thoroughly thought out. She did them all herself. There wasn't any question about anyone helping her. ~~She did that all herself.~~ She usually asked what was required and what was wanted in terms of the speech. She would be a supplementary speaker, not the main speaker at an affair or a meeting, and her speeches very rarely went beyond twenty minutes. She was an adequate speaker. I think that should be said. She was sincere and this got across. But she was not dynamic. She was not one of these people who stirs the emotions.

Q. No rabble-rouser?

A. No. The way they talk.

Q. I was going to ask you if she was a good organizer, but I won't ask that. I will ask, what you think her best quality was, and her usefulness to the party was.

A. I think her great contribution to the party was her personality and her conviction, and the sincere way in which this conviction came across. She was well known in California. She was the outstanding communist who was known in a very wide way, and it showed every time that she ran for office. There were people who responded to her name who may never even had heard of her, never even have seen her, but they responded to the name because it apparently struck a chord, especially with the older generation who knew of her activity in the suffragette years. I think that is what one would have to say - the person she was, and the sum total of what her activity made of her. I think this quality of sincerity, of deep integrity ~~xxxx~~ came across when she spoke.

Q. Did she have much of a life outside of these little tea parties with people.

A. No, I don't think she did. The traveling she did with Rudie - not in the last years, not in the last decade or so, in the last fifteen years. I personally don't know of anything outside of what she did in the movement.

Q. She did belong to other clubs like the League of Women Voters?

A. Yes, she did. She maintained those connections without being extremely active in those organizations.

Q. I have heard it said by people that she was used as a front for the party and used rather badly. What do you think about that?

A. I don't think it has much ground because she was so willingly a participant. I don't think there is any ground for that. This can be said about some people. I think that Paul Robeson, for instance, was badly used by the party, but I don't think that can be said about Anita. She threw herself so wholeheartedly into her relationship with the party and her work for the party. She felt that her best contribution was the money raising one because here is where she had contact among people who had money and she was very firm in getting money from people. She was very good. Her gentleness was there but firmness too. I think ~~that is not the true picture of her~~, that she was not misused by the party except to the degree that everybody was. In the final analysis - fortunately she was saved that.

Q. You and she were arrested at the same time in this election campaign where you signed these petitions, and she also signed these petitions. You were put in jail and she wasn't. What was her feeling about this?

A. No - we were not arrested at the same time. We were indicted at the same time. They arrested me first. I was tried. After I was in prison they arrested her. This was almost a year and a half later. There were six others indicted. None of them were arrested. They arrested Anita. I think this was an afterthought because of the fact that they were trying to diminish the party in the eyes of its followers and so on. Once they had arrested her, however (and I think George Anderson ^(E) was her attorney) he succeeded in getting the perjury charge, which ~~is a Federal offense~~, ^(a felony) changed to a ~~misdemeanor~~, ^(a misdemeanor) for swearing falsely, and she was given a suspended sentence.

Q. My research wasn't very good on that.

A. It's not very clear anyway unless you go through the old Western Workers and that means going through a whole year of them.

Q. She was a member of the national committee. She was either elected or appointed in 1940. Why did they put her on the national committee? Did they think that highly of her?

A. Yes. I think so. ~~I think~~ ^{did} when the national committee does something like that in that period it was because they were trying to improve the composition of the committee. There weren't many women on the committee. For the same reason I

was drawn into the national committee. ~~There weren't many women. They wanted to improve the composition.~~ But they also wanted to improve the representation from the states in the national committee, and when you looked at California the best known, most publicly known woman was Anita Whitney. This was not just for a short time, but a protracted period of time, actually I suppose more or less from the time the party was organized. I don't know when she joined exactly.

Q. I thought the national committee was supposed to be the leading political thinkers in the country. Would you categorize Anita Whitney as a leading political thinker?

A. No. And ~~I think~~ the national committee was not exactly that. It was the national board, the executive board within the national committee which was the policy making body and the leading Marxists of the American party. It was in that period (you see the national committee used to be a smaller body) that they expanded and became a very large committee. I don't remember the number, but it was a very large committee. It couldn't be a policy making committee. Sometimes the national committee just met once a year in between convention times. The conventions weren't even held regularly. The national board, which had twelve or thirteen people on it, was really the heart of the leadership. And within the national board they had a secretariat. You know - like the Soviet set up - a smaller body within that - about five people. I think that Anita could not be regarded as ~~either~~ a leading Marxist ^{ideo-} logically. She was not involved in the policy making of the organization, in determining the line of the party.

Q. Al did mention that she had a special interest in women being victims of exploitation. Do you know anything about that?

A. Yes. That is true. One of the things she usually participated in was in discussions around resolutions on the women question in the party, in conventions, and so on. She never overlooked the problem of women, and the exploitation of women. That is true. It was incorporated in speeches. It was shown by her participation in conventions and in the discussions at conventions, where there were always discussions about the woman question. She maintained a great interest in this which stemmed from her suffragette days. I think she would probably agree with many of the things which were said about the suffragette movement. I know she deplored

the fact that there wasn't a large women's movement outside of the party.

Q. I understand that everyone who knew her loved her. Can you put your finger on that. Was it that gentleness you talked about?

A. I think it was the gentleness and the consideration of people. She was very considerate and modest. I think her modesty too was something which endeared people to her. She was a loveable person.

Q. She sounds almost like a saint. Didn't she have any mean qualities at all?

A. I don't know of any. If she had they were thoroughly hidden. You know it is almost so. You almost have a feeling that Anita Whitney was very special.

Q. She sounds too good to be true.

A. Yes. That is true unless you knew her. Then you think, well she couldn't be different.

Q. She was in the party when Browder was removed from leadership. I understand she was a very good friend of his and his family. Do you know ~~xxx~~ how she felt about this, when the party made sudden turns, and people dropped off, and people's heads were chopped off politically?

A. She was very upset about that. I don't know to what extent it might have been a personal feeling about Browder and his wife, but that is true. They were good friends. I do know that she deplored the whole development of the Teheran policy of Browders and then what happened afterwards. At that point she was not as much involved in the party's daily work. Her health, her age, she didn't go to all those meetings. There were many meetings that were pretty hectic, pretty wild.

Q. She actually preferred - you said she was very active in her club. Now most party leaders, as I understand it, were not particularly active in their clubs because they were so busy going to other clubs, etc. Why was she in that capacity?

A. I think this was largely because she was the kind of person she was. She did not feel herself as being in a special category because she was part of a leading body, and she was

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- and she always felt that the important party organization was the club; that this was the avenue toward the outside - toward the people. This was largely by her own choice and her own decision. She just felt that this was it. She was very much admired for it by others who couldn't find the time to go to their club. She was also free of some of the problems that, let us say, Oleta and I had, or Bill, or some of the other people in the leadership who had to go to so many meetings of different kinds, both section meetings and so on, and the meetings of people in the mass organizations, the trade unions, and so on, so they had a superabundance of meetings in their fields of responsibility which Anita didn't have. So she had more time for these kind of things.

Q. Did she participate in club life like putting out leaflets, speaking on street corners.

A. Speaking on street corners she did not do because I think her voice wouldn't carry sufficiently, but she did do things like participating in leaflet distributions at certain points where she didn't have to climb stairs. She also succeeded in getting people to subscribe to the people's world and things of that kind. She would have little social agents in her home. in support of the paper. So she took on those kind of activities while she was working in the clubs. And then she participated in their internal life, the discussions and so on.

Q. If you had to summarize her, how would you do it?

A. Well, ~~I think a model~~ ^{she was} a very unique person, a uniqueness that could only come once. *Though not of working class background, she identified with the oppressed people, the men and women of the working class, and the black people of our country. Her convictions in the objective of Socialism, under Communist leadership, were strong. Her integrity, modesty, compassion and steadfastness gave her work in the Party such a quality of almost saintliness, as you pointed out. She was a cheerful follower, you might say, rather than a leader, either ideologically or politically. She was loved by many for all these qualities.*

CHS

Louise T. Lambert
FILE

March 26, 1958

National Committee
Communist Party of the United States

Dear comrades:

We are writing to inform you that, with profound regret, we are leaving the Communist Party. We have reached this conclusion reluctantly and only after a considerable period of time in which we, with others, hoped that the Party would move in the direction of overcoming its isolation from the American people.

Our reasons for this step go far beyond our disagreement with the decisions of the last national committee meeting which we believe reversed the main positions adopted by the 16th National Convention of the Party. If disagreement with the national committee were the only thing involved, we might well remain and press our viewpoint through the organization. Minorities in other parties, including Communist Parties, have on occasion waged a protracted fight under difficult conditions with an eventually successful outcome. But there are other and broader considerations which have impelled us to reach our present conclusion.

The Communist Party was the great radical movement of our generation, reaching its peak in the nineteen thirties and early forties. Had we to choose again, we would identify ourselves with it for the same reasons that caused us to do so then: these include the Party's important role in the unemployed movement, its contribution to organizing workers in basic industry, its effective participation in the fight for Negro rights, its pioneering efforts in the struggle against war and fascism, its solidarity with the socialist sector of the world, its aspirations for a socialist America, and its study of scientific socialism, Marxism-Leninism.

But we feel that today the picture is reversed. Our country is going through a profound crisis impinging upon every aspect of its life; new currents and movements are unfolding among the American people. These stirrings, these movements will eventually open up the American road to socialism. Only through participation in them, only through genuinely absorbing their significance, can we in turn influence others and help them move toward the future. The insistent mounting demand for peace, the magnificent struggle of the Negro people for equal rights, the current battles of the labor movement, the advance of depression with its millions of unemployed - all offer socialist minded Americans a great responsibility and opportunity. Yet the Communist Party stands in almost total isolation from these events, a narrow sect divorced from the American working class and the American people generally.

We believe that this situation is a result of a combination of objective conditions and subjective errors, which were largely analyzed by the 16th National Convention and which we feel require no repetition here. That convention concluded that the Party's key task was to overcome the deeply rooted dogmatism which has afflicted it for many years, and thereby to find the means of effectively merging Marxism with an indigenous American socialist movement.

This central task remains. But with great reluctance we have concluded that it will not be carried out by the present Communist Party. This is dramatized by the recent national committee meeting which in the face of new stirrings on the American scene, turned away from these fresh possibilities toward an even more rigid dogmatism. The action of the national committee merely epitomizes the basic situation within the Party as a whole. We believe that the Party no longer has the resources with which to overcome its isolation; in our opinion its reserves have been exhausted. By and large the Party's mass workers, including the bulk of its trade unionists, have left the Party. Moreover, the Party's losses, far from lessening as the objective situation improves, have continued. This process has gone on to the point where, in our judgment, the Party does not have within it the forces which might eventually overcome its present disastrous course. Nor do we believe it possible to seal off local party organizations from the effects of this total national state of affairs.

As long as we saw any possibility whatever for change, we were willing to remain even if this involved a prolonged battle. But today we feel such possibilities no longer exist; continued struggle within the existing organization under present circumstances could mean only a bitter, inner, factional fight. Therefore we believe our only alternative is to leave the Communist Party and seek fresh avenues of approach. We realize that some comrades who share our general outlook are not now prepared to take this action. We understand their reasons and we wish them well in any continued efforts they may make within the Party. We are sure that we will subsequently find common ground in the struggle for socialism.

We have no blueprint to offer for the future. We do not believe that conditions are yet ripe for the emergence of a definitive program and organization. But we do feel that more limited steps can be taken which will help prepare the soil for something new, and we intend to exert our efforts in that direction. We believe that we as individuals need to extend our ties with the labor movement, the Negro people's movement, and our own communities, seeking out especially those forward looking people everywhere who are themselves searching out answers to the problems of today. At the same time we feel efforts should be made by conscious Marxists, and especially by those who have left the Communist Party, to preserve and develop further what was healthy and valuable in our experience. We feel attempts should be made to overcome the fragmentation of that cadre which grew up largely under conditions of mass struggles in the thirties and forties. We want to maintain contact on a local and national scale, seeking avenues for continued political exchange. Discussion groups, forums, Marxist clubs and other local forms of study and action, as well as utilization of existing, and possibly new, publications could all contribute to the eventual emergence of a new united socialist movement.

In this connection, we recognize the importance of maintaining the People's World as a publication of the left. We will do all that we can to help guarantee its continuation and growth. We believe, however, that its future rests not only on continued efforts by its present supporters; it will in large part be determined by the ability of the paper to broaden its own character and base in the direction of wider left and progressive circles.

We had hoped that the Communist Party would itself move in the general direction indicated in this letter, in keeping with the decisions of the 16th Convention, including its instruction to the national committee to foster the perspective of an eventual united socialist movement or party. We believe this would have offered an avenue through which the Party could hand on its legacy to future generations. But since there is no longer a possibility for this outlook within the Party, we are compelled to seek it through new, if as yet unexplored, channels.

We are sending a collective letter of resignation to emphasize the fact that ours is not the action of hopeless people retiring from a fruitless cause, but rather marks the beginning of an active search for what we are convinced will be a hopeful future. We are submitting our individual resignations to our clubs at which time we will also make this statement available to them.

From Northern California

Bill Sennett
Loretta Starvus
Louise Todd
Oleta O'Connor Yates
Martin
Five additional members in
San Francisco

From Southern California

Frank Carlson
Mort Newman
Henry Steinberg
Celeste Strack
Don Wheeldin
Martha Wheeldin
Art
Bebe
Bob K.
Frances
Janet
Kappy
Lou B.
Milt
Phil R.
Lil C.

Rosalie Fischer

MOTHER

It was the year 1882, July 23rd that I was born. I had two older brothers, Herman, 7 years older than I, and Ewald five years older. We lived at that time in Verden, Province of Hanover, Germany. I was given the name of Rosalie, Emilie, Eliza Dinslage. The working condition in Germany were very poor. My father was a cigar maker. As was his friend Mr. Deinert. The Deinerts had only one little son at that time, who was about the age of my younger brother. About that time some agents arrived from the Hawaii Islands. Their object was to get some manpower to come to the islands for work on the sugarcane fields. The agents were very fortunate in contacting these cigarmakers and persuading them to come to the Islands, which were a veritable paradise etc. etc. So when these agents talked to my father and his friends how beautiful the islands were etc. etc/ their minds were made up to go there. Of course they did not have the slightest idea what it was like over there. Nothing about the climate, the working conditions, they were absolutely ignorant on that score.

Sugar was the main product produced. So we were all cramped on an old freighter called "Ehrenfels" which had seen its better days long ago. The description my parents gave of this trip around the Horn across the Pacific Ocean thru the Straits of Magellan was a most adventurous undertaking. And the stories told later about it was then very funny, altho not so when it happened. For nine weeks they were on this old steamer. Five hundred people crowded on it. The food was terrible. Mostly salted meat. My brother, Herman got a cankerous mouth and could not eat anything for a time. I was a lucky one, was nursed on the breast by my dear mother. She said I had gotten the measles too. She was used to stay up on deck with me during the nights when the ship crossed the torid zone. Five adults died and were sunk into the ocean. The measles having been brought on the ship, 33 children died from them and were sunk into the ocean. Five-adults-passed-away-also.--- We sailed around the Cape of Good Hope around the south pole. It took nine weeks. When we reached the south pole region near the Straits of Magellan there came some boats toward the ship and had some very large women and one small shrivelled looking man in them. They begged for tobacco and food. However they did not get much because this shipload of humans were very poor themselves. So we sailed thru the Straits of Magellan to the Pacific Ocean and straight ahead across to the Hawaiian Islands without stopping at any land until we entered the harbor of Honolulu, and the next day on an interisland steamer to the island of Kauai. This was a most harrowing experience this group of people had ever experienced. The ships on this interisland sailing back and forth from Honolulu are only small steamers and the ocean is so rough the ships are bounced around like cockleshells so to speak. The ship could not land right in the harbor. It was emptied of its passengers one by one handed down a rope ladder into small boats and taken to the shore. So it was this time with our people. The mothers cried out loud when their offsprings were grabbed by the hawaiian sailors and given from to the other until they had them in the small boats. However they all landed safely. By this time it was pitchdark. Then they were loaded on Ox carts, towed, and taken to their respective homes. One oxcart having a trunk in the back lost it. It rolled down the hill into the creek. It gets very dark there right after six o'clock. So that took some time until they had the trunk up the hill and on the cart again.

My parents were taken to a small shack which had only two rooms in it. They arrived there in pitchdarkness. It was just a wooden shanty with large cracks on the walls where the boards had been nailed on, and in these cracks the cockroaches and centipedes lived. The plantation owner brought a single man, bachelor, the same evening intending him to live with us. My mother was furious, she told him off good and plenty. So he took him to some other place. My mother was the only person who had light in the house this first evening. She was ever thoughtfull to take candles and little things which one needs but most people forget. I was only six months old at the time so could not help much as yet. But these people who had come to the Islands lived themselves into the conditions there rapidly. They had to bake their own bread, for instance. And so they tried and the first attempts were all failures. My mother tried and failed several times. However finally by putting sourdough aside for raising the next batch she finally had success and some good loaves of bread came out of the oven. It became a habit that the women borrowed from each other, the sour dough to start the batch of bread on. And that was not all they finally had the most delicious coffee cakes. So when they visited each other, there was always cake to have their-odd-- with their coffee klatach.

(2) My father was given work on the sugar plantation, as overseer, meaning that he had to be a foreman, seeing to it that the Japanese workers did their work right. This was after the owner of the plantation put him on this work. My father was not able to do the hard work of pulling the leaves off the stalk of sugar cane in the hot tropical sun. And later he was transferred to the mill as sugar boiler, which was a very good job. When we had lived in Kapaia for about ten years, My father received a good opportunity to work in the Mill owned by a Mr. Koelling who lived in the town of Hanalei. Here is where I was the happiest child. Mr. Koelling had four children and a governess to teach them at home. The English school being too far away from our home, I was allowed to go to the Koellings residence and attend the German classes. They had a small schoolroom built in the rear of the place and these were my most cherished childhood days. Anyone could wish for. Fräulein Grau was our teacher. There were five Koelling children. However the three oldest attended school and I was there.

Hanalei, I shall never forget this place. Our house was on a small hillside, with great mango trees around it. We had a view over the river and rice fields owned by Chinese. and beyond these there were great mountains. The road across the river, which was crossed by a saw, it is called, a platform on which the people or wagons stand and which is then pulled across the river by a rope fastened to the each end across the river and that way is pulled across to the other side. We were given a cow to milk. And we bought two horses which my father and brothers used. But the white mare we had was such a good patient horse I was allowed to ride her also. This was our best recreation. My brother and Koelling's Three oldest used to ride with the children and I used to ride to some caves, or to the beach or just race each other up on the road above our house. We had such wonderful times together. This was really the happiest time of my life.

Here also the Queen of Hawaii visited the People on Kauai when she learned that she was to be deposed from her Kingdom of Hawaii in Honolulu. the year 1892. Queen Lilioukalani toured all the islands in order to speak for keeping Hawaii a Kingdom instead of having it turned into a State. It was a great day when she came to our Hanalei. We children greeted her with great bouquets of flowers. There was a grand Ball that evening in the Hall at the Beach. The Queen made a Speech. However it was too late, she could not save her Kingdom from the American Capitalists. It has been made into an American colony possession.

I shall never forget my participation in a way with this great event. There was a great floor and that was decked with ferns and palm leaves and the poi was in great large containers. Also fish of every description prepared in different ways. Roast Pigs, Poi, all the delicacies that Hawaiian cuisine could furnish was at hand. We needed no forks or knives. The two forefingers of the right hand were needed to scoop up a mouthful of poi. It was delicious.

After the great supper the hall was cleared and the dancing began. In this I did not take part. From a full day I crawled into a corner and fell asleep. My mother enjoyed the dancing very much. There never was any of that kind of enjoyment on other days. It was a day never to be forgotten. The sad part was that the Queen did not succeed in keeping the Islands. And so came the time to leave the Islands because there was no more way of making a living. Mr. Koelling gave up the Mill. He went bankrupt. My father was out of work. So we had to pack up and leave. The hardest part was to sell our horses. We had gotten so attached to them

Our Mare Bella had a little pony. He was to become my riding horse. But now we had to sell our horses and leave for America. It was the year 1892. I was then ten years old.

My most difficult duty was from now on I had to wear shoes. My father rode to the main town to buy some for me. He took my measure. For safety's sake he measured them a little bit longer than my foot. When he reached the store in Lihue, he added a little bit more to the size for safety's sake-- safety's sake, be sure they will be large enough. When he came home with them I tried them on and they were too large. What I do? I had to wear them. All the way to America, mind you!!!!

On the ship leaving Honolulu, I discarded the shoes as soon as we started on our way. At least I had a week's time of barefootedness still, until we reached San Francisco. And I enjoyed them fully, as also my girl friend and her mother made friends with one of the sailors and he never failed to bring us something sweet to eat from the first class cabin.

(10)

~~Phrases to be used~~

After a week Ocean trip on the steamer (I have forgotten the name of it) we arrived in San Francisco at the ferry. What a bustle and noise and hollering. My father had given us instructions and told us to stay right behind him and hold tight to your packages. We did. The hotel bussboys were hollering their prospective hotel names out very loud; Russ house! Russ house! Russ House! I can still hear that when I think of that time. And Alexandria, Alexandria! and all the others which I have forgotten now. Then came a man with some cap on. He was from our hotel where we were to go. But when he wanted to relieve my father of his suitcases my father said "No, no, no, no," He was thinking here are the fellows who want to rob him of his packages, just as he had been told by a friend on the islands how the bad men were here in America. The porter from the Hotel finally convinced my father that he was a porter from the hotel he wanted to go to, my father consented he take our bundles. We were helped on the bus and away we went to our hotel. I think this hotel was on Powell St. I remember distinctly that there was a Jewlry store next to the entrance of this hotel. My friend, Anna and I took off our shoes as soon as we were shown our rooms, what a relief. We walked barefoot around the upper hall. Then we ventured down the stairs and to the sidewalk. ~~Right next to this building was jewlry-~~ There outside was our jewlry store. We stood there for as long as our parents did not call us. Those beautifull gold rings, brooch watches etc. etc. we could not look at them long enough we were so entranced by the shiny gold. Never had we seen anything like this.

Our parents went househunting. And soon came and told us we were to get ready to leave the hotel. They had found a flat in the workimgmen8s district. It was nice that our parents did not live far apart. So my girl friend and I could be together. This was a blessing because neither one of us knew the english language. After school we had at least each other to play with. O, I did not like San Francisco and ~~with~~ the school and the children. The children were so fresh and most of the time they ^{were} chewing something that they did not swallow over. It was gum. I had never seen such stuff that would not break up so one could swallow it. The children even begged it from each other to chew awhile. If one wanted something from the other, they would say "I'll lend you my gum to chew for awhile if you let me have it." They called us Dutchman. Made remarks a bout our clothing. It is true that my mother dressed me very neatly but she made my underpants too long and the result was they always showed below my dress. This was very embarrassing to me. Until I found a way of stuffing them into my stockings.

My father found work in a cigar fantory. My oldest brother found work in a machine shop that he liked very much. My brother Ewald also found work in a shop that produced some braids, laces, and fancy braids for all kinds of uses. One day my father came home and said he had had an offer to buy a cigar factory in the city of Paso Robles. That a fellow worker wanted to go with him in partnership in this business. So here we were, hardly getting settled in sanF^rancisco when a move was to be made a gain. The part that my mother did not like was that my brothers were to stay here in San Francisco. She was so worried to leave them here. I think they were About 18 and 20 years old.

My mother arranged to have ~~five have them~~ live with friends who had come from the islands with us. So we moved to Paso Robles. And the other family who had gone into partnership with my father also. They were a very young couple. I think they had one small child. The business was such a meager affair. Not even enough for one party to live decently, absolutely not enough for two. So after a few months the partner who had only put \$100 into the business had to take it back and move away. I think they moved to Santa Cruz. And my parents had a struggle to live. They were accostumd to poverty. So we stayed there and lived frugally. My mother was very economical. She could sew very nice. She made all our clothes. I started school. We had very good schools there. And the Teachers, women, were very thorough. I loved them. I went from the first grade thru the eighth. Just missing two months of the eighth when we moved again to San Francisco. My brother Ewald had gotten very ill soon after we had settled in Paso Robles. Our Doctor friend told my father, "have the boy come here immediately". He sent the telegram himself and the next day our Ewald came on the 5 o'clock train. We were all shaken up by the looks him; emaciated and weak. It was a blessing to have Dr. Steiner living with us, to take him into his care. For a whole year my brother was terribly sick. My mother had to keep the fire in the old stove going nite and day. And many times the Doctor made a very serious face when he saw him in the morning. My poor mother did not get much sleep attending to Ewald. One morning, however, the doctor said "We have him over the hill now". Ewald would sit out in the sunshine for an hour each day. Finally he recovered.

I have to describe the Doctor a little more. He lived and boarded with us. He was a homeopathic doctor. And he lived with us as I have mentioned before. He had a pony and a two wheeled cart which took him to the neighboring towns to visit his patients. He was a large husky man, and we always had to smile when he started off in his little two wheeler. Several times he took me along to visit his patients who lived in a town about six miles distance from our home. The seat of the cart had backrest, just a small iron backrest, a few inches high. He being so heavy would sink the seat down on his side, and I would be raised up on my side. The pony that pulled this outfit was a very nice little horse. We all loved it. And when my brother had gotten over his severe illness the Doctor gave him the outfit. The Doctor would play Dominoes with me in the evenings. And when he saw that he was going to lose, he started to cheat. I would grab his arm and did not let him get away with the cheating. He had hidden some dominoes in his coat sleeve. He hollered, he had rheumatism in his arm. He was a Bavarian. The saying went at that time that the Bavarians were rough and tough. We liked him. He had saved my brother's life.

After some months he had his lady friend come to our town and house and they were married and lived with us for awhile until they found a home for themselves. When we moved away from Paso Robles, they had long before moved to some other city, I do not know where any more. I shall always remember him as the man who saved my brother's life.

After my brother Ewald had come to San Francisco again to be with my brother Herman, it was rather lonesome in our house. I still went to school. Grammar. The school was only a short distance across the street from our home. It was my whole interest. There was nothing that interested me as much as going to school. At one Christmas time when my brother Herman brought a small violin to me, and a friend, Mr. Koenig who gave my brother Ewald lessons on a trombone which Ewald had bought for himself, offered to give me lessons free, my joy was great. Once a week I would walk to his house and get a lesson. He had a daughter whom he wanted to instruct with me. However she had no desire and no talent for the violin. So Mr. Koenig kept on giving me lessons once a week. This was the most interesting and pleasant time of my life. However it was not to last very long. My parents were not making a very good living and my father could hardly pay all expenses. So we thought of going back to San Francisco. I had made the grammar grades up to two months to go still. I hated to lose this time. However, My mother who could not understand why the youth here in America went to school so long. She had to go to work at 14 years of age. In Germany that was, made me stay home the last two months of the eighth grade. I was very depressed. And when we gave up our little cigar store and came again to San Francisco, I had to think of getting a job of some sort. The only thing I could have done without a better education would have to be going a nurse girl for some rich families' children. My brother, Herman said, "If Louise could do typing and stenography I could get her a fine job in my shop." My father did not have the means so I had to do whatever I could get. I took care of rich people's children had very few days off even to go home for an hour or so. I hated the work. However, the children always liked me where I was employed. It was to me like being a slave. Never any time for yourself. To do what you wanted to, as innocent and simple it might be.

Until one day, I was then 19 years old already. An Agent for a business college came to my Father's shop where he was making cigars to sell and asked him if he had any children who would like to go to business college. My father said yes, but he could not afford the tuition. The agent said he would take it out in cigars. And that is how I was given the opportunity to take a business course which after six months I finished and received a job being an office worker for a secretary in meat concern. I worked here for six months and having found my future life partner in Max Todd, we were married in 1904. He was a Baker. After a very short honeymoon, he went back to work in a bakery. We were very happy after a year to have our first baby. My mother was with me when the midwife announced in the night of May 12th here is your healthy daughter. We lived then in an old tenement house in the district which in 1906 was burned to the ground in the earthquake and fire.

I think my Louise was a year old when we moved further out into the Mission District and there in 1906 happened the terrible earthquake and fire in San Francisco. We were fortunate having moved just before this happened. All of the lower Market street district was destroyed. It was a terrible sight. The uprooted streets and the burned districts. My husband Max was working in a bakery which luckily did not burn down. So he worked there for some time still. They were exceptionally busy because it was one of few bakeries that did not burn down. The years following were very busy ones for San Francisco. It was finally built up again to a fine and lovely city.

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